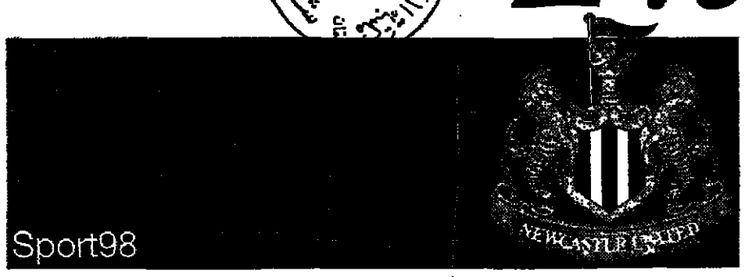
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The Guardian EUROPE





Tornado pilots bomb Iraq as US tries to rally faltering support

Britain joins onslaught

Martin Kettle and Julian Borger in Washington and Richard Norton-Taylor

BRITAIN placed itself at the centre of the military conflict against Iraq last night when Tornado pilots joined the second wave of the American armed assault on Saddam Hussein amid a concerted effort in Washington and London to rally faltering international support for Operation Desert Fox.

An unspecified number of RAF Tornados returned safely to base in Kuwait after Britain joined the air assault against Iraq for the first time, a spokesman in Kuwait said.

Air Marshal John Day, Director of Operations at the Ministry of Defence, said it was too early to assess damage. He refused to give details of targets but said they would have included command and control centres, air defence installations, sites with the capability of producing or storing weapons of mass destruction and the military capability which allowed Saddam to threaten his neighbours.

The second round of attacks began in the early evening, local time. In Baghdad, air raid sirens sounded at dusk amid reports of 13 massive explosions. Western journalists on the roof of the culture and information ministry in the Iraqi capital said the sky was lit up with a bright white light after a rapid series of powerful explosions which shook the building.

British Tornados, B-52 bombers and American navy jets went in as the Pentagon reported that 280 cruise missiles were launched on 50 or more Iraqi targets on Wednesday during the first night of attacks.

US Defence Secretary William Cohen and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff General Hugh Shelton showed aerial reconnaissance photographs of the destroyed military intelligence headquarters in Baghdad. They said a barracks at Abu Ghraib, outside Baghdad, belonging to the Special Republican Guard, responsible for transport and concealment of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, had also been destroyed.

The campaign would be relatively short, Mr Cohen hinted. But there was no indication whether the US and Britain intended to end the attacks before the onset of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan this weekend.

In Washington, President Clinton said it would have been a "disaster" if the US had stood aside after the latest showdown and allowed Iraq to build up its stocks of chemical and biological weapons. Mr Clinton spent much of yesterday on the telephone seeking support for the US action from the heads of state of Egypt, Jordan, Israel and France.

The decision by the US and Britain to take action against Iraq without the blessing of the UN Security Council starkly divided world opinion. Russian President Boris Yeltsin said the strikes "crudely violated" the UN charter and were "fraught with the most dramatic consequences" for the Gulf region. Russia's lower house backed a resolution accusing the US and Britain of "international terrorism", while Russian military units were put on alert.

China joined Russia in strongly condemning the attacks, while France distanced itself from the raids — putting the US and Britain at odds with the other three permanent members of the Security Council.

French President Jacques Chirac said the bombings would not solve the Iraq crisis and he was working to bring about a rapid end to the conflict.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "This is a sad day for the United Nations, and for the world."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright acknowledged that the US was encountering "some expressions of regret that a peaceful solution could not be met".

As Iraqi sources claimed that the first day of raids had caused five deaths and 30 wounded, Mr Clinton admitted there would be "unintended casualties" as the raids continued.

US officials said that President Saddam and his family were not targets. "We are targeting military or militarily related targets, period," Defence Secretary Cohen said.

In the Commons Tony Blair went out of his way to offer President Clinton his government's unqualified support and angrily rejected claims from leftwing MPs that Operation Desert Fox is a deliberate distraction from the impeachment threat to the President.

Calling the outbreak of hostilities "a day of triumph", President Saddam called on his people to resist: "Fight the enemies of God, the Arab nation and humanity," he said on Iraqi radio.

The US imposed strict security measures in its embassies and in US installations around the world. It closed its embassies in many African nations.

Britain said all UK tourists in Israel would be assisted to leave the region.



American jets on the USS Enterprise in the Persian Gulf yesterday prepare to attack Iraqi air defence radar installations PHOTOGRAPH: JACOB HOLLINGSWORTH



On other pages

☐ Julian Borger on how the attacks unfolded; David Hirst dissects the internal opposition to Saddam, page 2

☐ Ian Black assesses the Allies' aims, page 3

☐ Reaction around the world and Britain's Parliamentary debate, plus Simon Hoggart's sketch, page 4

☐ Comment from Martin Woollacott, top American and French journalists and the Iraqi opposition's viewpoint, page 10

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Pinochet ruling set aside over links to Amnesty

Clare Dyer Legal Correspondent

BRITAIN'S highest court broke new ground yesterday when it set aside one of its most historic judgments because of allegations of bias against one of the judges.

Five senior past and present law lords unanimously set aside an earlier Lords' ruling that General Augusto Pinochet was not immune from extradition and prosecution for crimes against humanity.

The original judgment by a different panel of law lords on November 25, hailed around the world, overturned by a three-two majority a High Court ruling in October that the former Chilean dictator was immune from prosecution as a former head of state.

That decision was set aside yesterday after a two-day hearing following a petition by Gen Pinochet's lawyers claiming that Lord Hoffmann, one of the majority who ruled against the general, should have been disqualified because of long-standing and close links with Amnesty International.

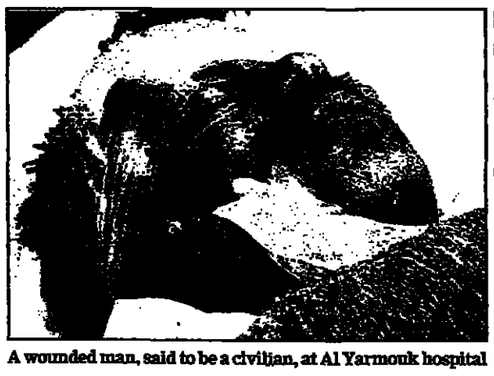
The unprecedented blow to the integrity of British justice has sent shock waves through the senior judiciary. Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, in a letter to the senior law lord, Lord Browne-Wilkinson, pressed for rigorous new procedures for declaring interests to ensure that such a fiasco never happened again.

A new appeal will be heard next month before a different panel of law lords, who could rule that Gen Pinochet is immune from prosecution. If so, the extradition process would be halted and the general freed to return to Chile.

Lord Hoffmann was abroad and making no comment yesterday.

Hoffman silence dismays judges, page 6; Leader comment, Letters, page 11

'What have the Iraqi people done so you punish us like this?'



A wounded man, said to be a civilian, at Al Yarmouk hospital

David Sharrock reports from Baghdad

SIRENS at sunset, mingling their ominous wail with the muezzins' call to prayer, signalled another sleepless, death-filled night for Dr Ali Ghazala and his staff at Baghdad's Al Yarmouk hospital. The B-52s were on their way back.

You would expect panic on Baghdad's second night under aerial siege. Even government officials acknowledge that the anti-aircraft artillery atop the majestic gates of President Saddam's palace between the river Tigris and "Mother of Our Bones" boulevard provides no more than a scattering of useless tracer fire to brighten the darkness.

But Dr Ali and his colleagues, indeed the people on the streets, seem in no hurry to run for cover. There is a macabre fatalism at work in Baghdad, typified by the wedding party driving merrily past his hospital, leaning on their horns, adding to the ambience of "what will be will be".

Dr Ali's first Operation Desert Fox victims began arriving a little before 1am yesterday. "In minutes the casualty unit was full and there was a lot of blood and a lot of noise. Some of them were on beds, some in chairs and the worst were taken immediately into theatre," he said.

He saw his last patient at 10am — a 13-year-old boy, Qasim Jassim el Fatlawi, who, he said, had been standing outside the front door of his home in the Jihad district when he was struck by shrapnel. "It pierced his skull, killing him instantly," added the doctor, fingering the pieces of shrapnel sitting on his desk. "When it was all over we had treated 35 injured and 14 martyrs."

His word for the dead struck not quite so odd a note in the hospital director's office when one took into account the large portrait of President Saddam behind his desk.

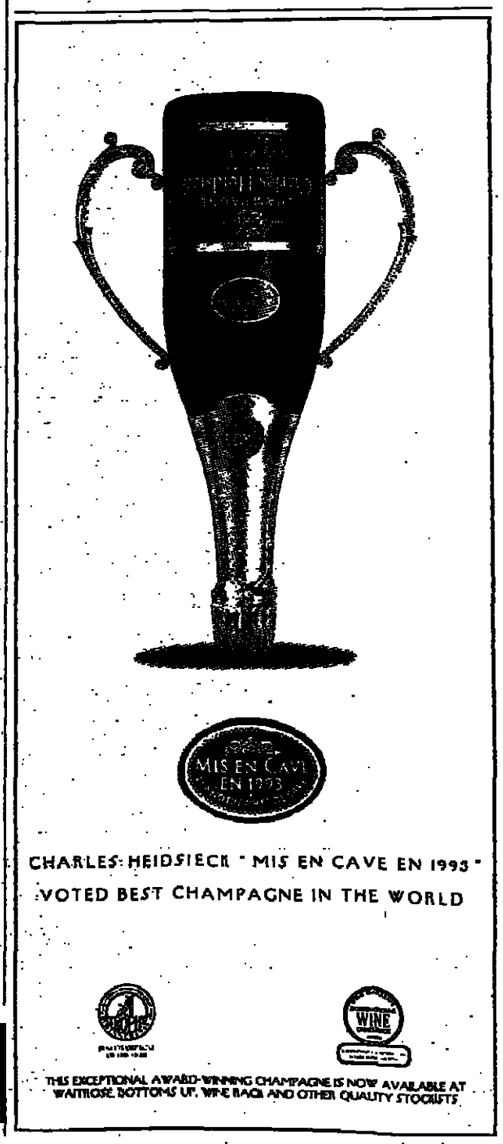
We were invited to meet the survivors, having first been warned that the most seriously wounded had been moved to specialist units. Accompanied by "minders" provided by the ministry of information, journalists covering the crisis are given full rein to suggest what they want to see, though a suspicion lurks over how much remains concealed.

It seemed strange that Baghdad had echoed to the sounds of incoming cruise missiles for six hours and yet so little damage was apparent. Dr Ali's hospital serves approximately a third of Baghdad and he had no idea how many civilians had been killed elsewhere.

The ward was filled with gentle moaning, blood-stained sheets and bandaged heads. The face of one whimpering man was blue-black and distended. Nobody looked in a fit state to tell what had befallen them. But then, in a corner bed, a man was beckoning us over. "Are you English?" he asked me. "Are you American?" to another reporter. "I am a businessman, what I do to America and England? So why do they send a rocket to my house? Why?"

His name was Jassam al Zubeidi and he had only recovered consciousness an hour earlier. Later we went to look at his house, a fine

turn to page 4, column 7



Abu Dhabi D 8.50	Egypt E£ 6.50	Kuwait KD 0.50	Qatar QR 8.50
Albania US$ 2	Estonia K 30	Latvia US$ 2	Romania LEI 32,500
Andorra FF 10	Finland FM 15	Lebanon L.L 3000	Russia US$ 2.75
Austria AS 30	France FF 12	Luxembourg LF 65	Saudi Arabia R 10
Bahrain BD 0.85	Germany DM 3.80	Madeira E 310	Slovakia SK 65
Belgium BF 70	Greece D 500	Malta ML 0.50	Slovenia SLT 290
Bulgaria LV 580	Hong Kong HK$ 25	Morocco D 25	Spain P 275
Canada C$ 3.95	Hungary F 300	Netherlands G 4.25	Sweden SK 17
Croatia KN 15.00	Iceland IK 185	Norway NK 18	Switzerland SF 3.50
Cyprus CC 1.00	Israel NIS 13.00	Oman OR 1.00	Thailand B 80
Czech Rep. KC 56	Italy L 3,500	Pakistan R 80	Turkey TL 170,000
Denmark DK 17	Jordan JD 1.25	Poland Z 6.90	Ukraine US$ 3.50
Dubai D 8.50	Kenya KSH 150	Portugal E 280	USA US$ 3.00

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UK news
Drug abuse is up to five times higher among teenagers in Britain than those in other European countries, a survey shows. **Page 5**

International
Two leading pro-democracy activists went on trial in China yesterday, showing how far Beijing still has to go on the road to reform. **Page 9**

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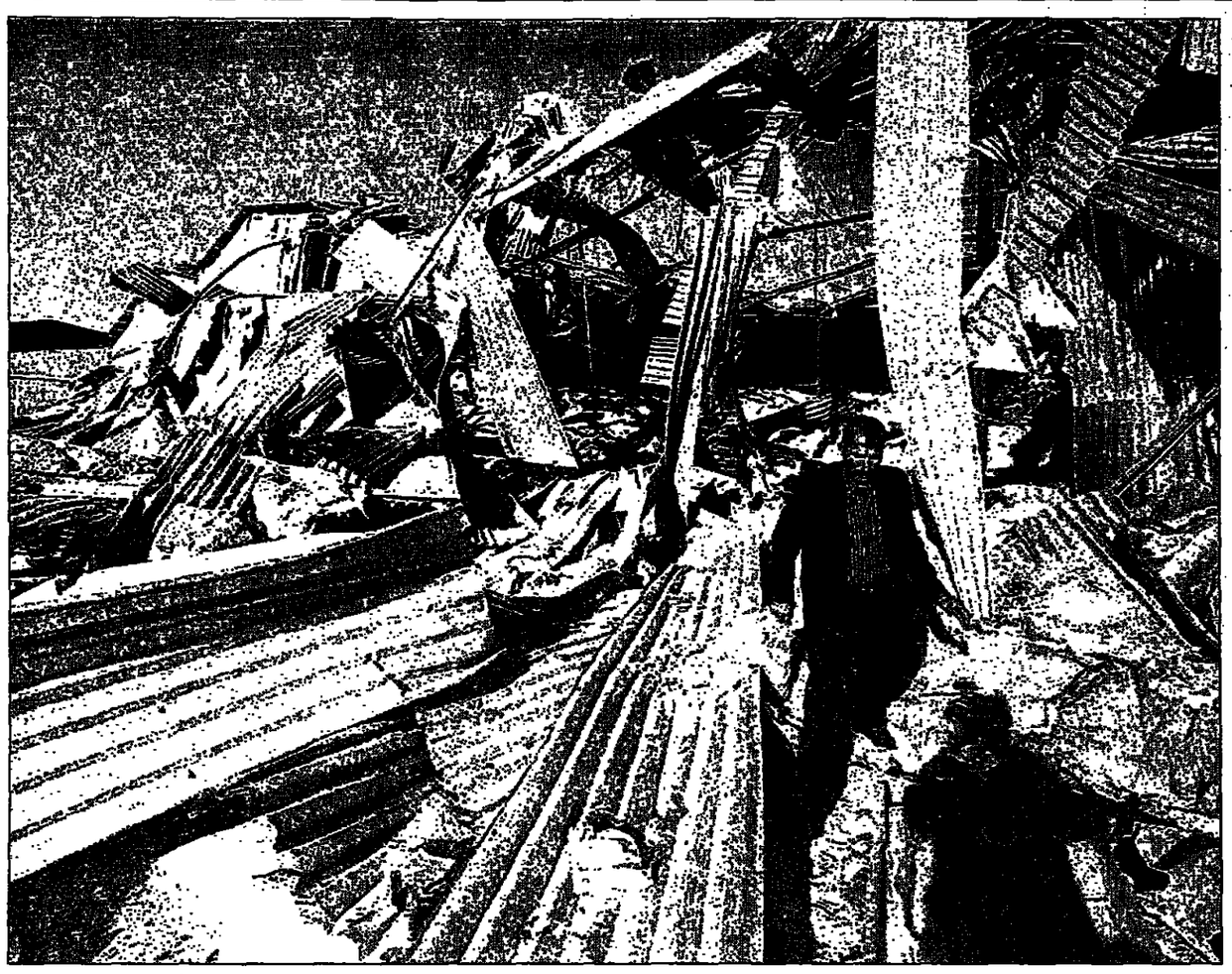
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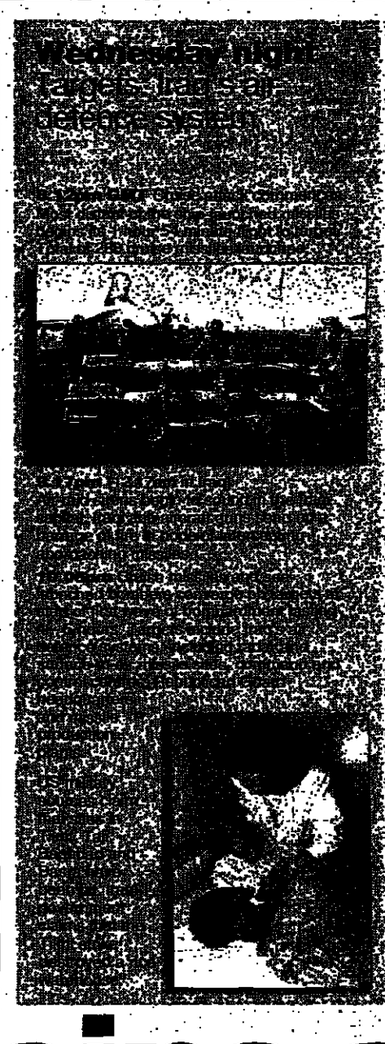
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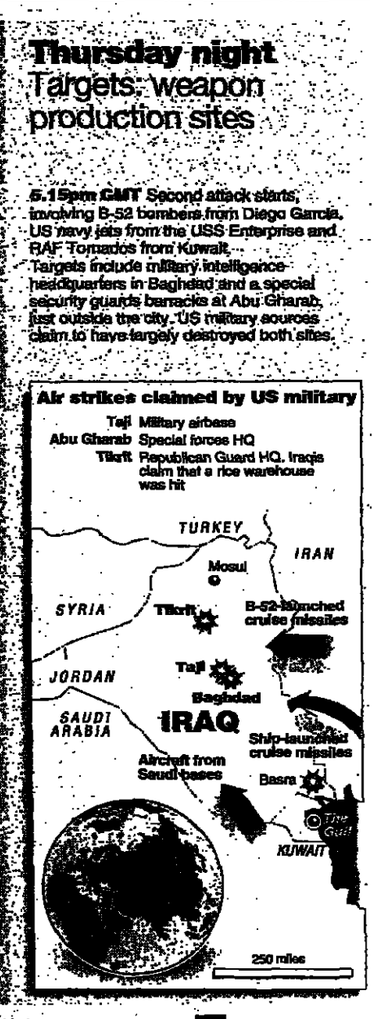
Attack on Iraq

British pilots flew in yesterday with a fistful of gold coins which could keep them alive if they were brought down over Iraq









An Iraqi among rubble in Tikrit after one of the first US air raids. Iraq claimed the destroyed building was a rice warehouse PHOTOGRAPH: RAMZI HAIDAR

A fistful of gold coins and a

All key advisers gave nod to air strikes

Julian Borger in Washington and Richard Norton-Taylor

BRITISH Tornado fighter-bombers took off from Kuwait last night in a second wave of air strikes, not knowing for sure whether Iraqi anti-aircraft missiles were waiting for them.

The first wave of about 300 US cruise missiles had converged the night before on Saddam Hussein's SAM missiles, and the nerve centres of his computerised anti-aircraft defences, with the intention of giving these sorties a free ride.

Initial reports had been positive — no Iraqi radars had locked on to US bombers on Wednesday — and it seemed Baghdad had been taken by surprise. But military planners knew this apparent docility could have been a ploy, and the British pilots flew in yesterday with a fistful of gold coins which would hopefully keep them alive if they were brought down over Iraq.

The 10 solid gold South African krugerrands, each worth about £180, would be used to bribe local people into helping the pilots to safety. Also stashed in their combat survival waistcoats, the pilots carried a note in a dozen languages, including Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, asking for help.

"I am British and I do not speak your language," the note says. "I will not harm you! I bear no malice towards your people. My friend, please provide me with food, water, shelter, clothing and necessary medical attention. Also, please provide safe passage to the nearest friendly forces of any country supporting the British and their allies. You will be rewarded for assisting me when you present this number and my name to British authorities."

As the Tornado pilots flew into the darkness, Britain took a leap of faith with them, throwing its forces into the biggest military venture of the Clinton presidency, and by far the most controversial.

As soon as the attack was announced by the White House just before 5pm Washington time, the president's opponents denounced what they described as a diversionary action, designed to fend off the threat of an impeachment debate, scheduled to begin yesterday morning.

In a congressional mutiny in a time of foreign hostilities, unprecedented in recent times, the Senate majority leader Trent Lott issued a statement saying he could not support the action and questioning the timing and the policy.

Administration officials denied the slur, but ultimately the truth is locked inside the president's mind. Impeachment and the Iraqi crisis had waltzed through the year like inseparable partners. Each time the confrontation between UN weapons inspectors and the Baghdad regime flared up and US forces gathered for action in the Gulf, fingers around the world pointed towards Bill Clinton's domestic problems.

He heard of the latest weapons inspections impasse while touring Jerusalem on Sunday with the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. US officials at the UN had been told that Richard Butler, chairman of the UN Special Commission (Unscom) was about to deliver a harshly-worded report, accusing the Iraqi government of blocking Unscom inspectors at every turn.

While the president fended off questions about impeachment and the stumbling Israeli-Palestinian peace process over the following 48 hours, his consultations with his aides focused on whether to use force.

The decision on Tuesday night was made on Air Force One as President Clinton flew back from the Middle East. White House aides said all his key advisers gave the nod to air strikes, most importantly the secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and the national security adviser, Sandy Berger. Joining the airborne discussion on a conference line, vice-president Al Gore, the defence secretary, William Cohen, and the White House chief of staff, John Podesta, also gave their consent. Then the president called Tony Blair, who pledged his support.

Planning for the air strikes had begun on November 15, a day after an earlier assault had been recalled at the last minute after Baghdad offered assurances that it would finally provide unfettered access to the Unscom teams. President Clinton had been attacked by hawks in Congress for backing down, but insisted this would be Saddam Hussein's last chance.

The executive order to begin preparations for the attack was issued from Air Force One. As soon as the president got back to the White House, just before midnight on Tuesday, the damage limitation began. He stayed up until the early hours calling Congressmen to convince them the decision was unrelated to his impeachment problems.

In more talks on Wednesday, the president's Demo-

Divide and rule is cornerstone of Saddam's regime of terror

BEHIND THE FACADE: The sectarianism that keeps him in power has been exported to the opposition, writes **David Hirst**

ON THE face of it, Saddam Hussein's rule is as monolithic as the opposition is divided. There is total popular support for the man and his works.

But that is only the facade, induced by the terror he inspires not only in the people at large but among his own followers, from the lowliest to the highest. The almost magic aura of invulnerability that surrounds him is what, above all, holds the whole despotic system together. Killing him would almost certainly bring the whole regime down.

It is not, apparently, an Anglo-American war aim to "get" Saddam. Whether sincere or not, that is certainly recognition of an inescapable reality. "How", aptly asked an Arab newspaper the other day, "can one eliminate a man who doesn't shake anyone's hand until his fingernails have been checked for poison, doesn't use mobile phones to avoid being traced, travels incognito, holds his meetings in secret locations, doesn't appear in public and moves about in 10 identical convoys so no one can see the vehicle he is in?"

But his personal ascendancy would be nothing without his elite military and security apparatus.

All Iraqi regimes have built their power on the sectarian solidarity of the Sunni Muslim minority, but none has taken this to the extremes that Saddam has. He relies not merely on a minority, but on a small minority of a minority; and the more mistrustful, with time, he has become, the more he has concentrated power within his immediate family, notably his sons Udai and Qusai.

The 80,000-strong Republican Guards are drawn mainly from the Sunni community; far better equipped and paid than the dispirited regular army, their main purpose is to defend the regime. Above them are the Special Republic Guards (SRG) and the Special Security Organisation (SSO); their only task is to protect Saddam and his family.

The 6,000-strong SRG consists of 14 brigades, five of which are always around him. The 800-strong SSO engage in surveillance operations in close collaboration with it. "You will find the SSO inside Saddam's palaces", said an Iraqi opposition expert, "the SRG outside them. But, typically, the rank and file of each is forbidden even to talk to the other." All their members come from his hometown of Tikrit and its immediate environs. Both groups are controlled by Qusai.

If sustained aerial bombardment did real damage to these key institutions, it would undoubtedly put the regime in danger. That is why, whenever the Americans and the British have been on the point of attacking, Saddam has dispersed his Republican Guards from their main bases in and around the capital. This time, the attack came so swiftly he may not have managed the dispersal.

The dangers for Saddam are threefold. First, though he himself is almost certain to survive any onslaught, his apparatus might be so badly mauled that the people, perceiving weakness and confusion, rise in insurrection.

The second is the more organised threat of Iraqi opposition groups. On paper there are no fewer than 70 organisations in the Iraqi opposition. Most of them are based in Arab states or the West.

Their profusion is one measure of how notoriously divided that opposition is, how hard it must strive to achieve the minimal community of purpose deemed necessary to bring the tyrant down and keep the country in one piece.

One opposition section speaks essentially for the orthodox Sunni Muslims of central Iraq, who, though comprising 15 per cent of the population, dominate the country's political life. Another speaks for the Shi'ite Muslims of the south; at 60 per cent they are by far the largest single community. And then there are the Kurds of the north.

There has always been friction between these communities, but it is one of Saddam's successes that he has exported into their ranks much of the sectarianism on which he relies.

Reinforcing these indigenous tensions is the fact that all parties look to rival foreign sponsors, Arab or further afield. The communists are perhaps the only important party that can claim to be truly multi-ethnic.

Historically the least visible but most dedicated opposition has come from the Shi'ites. Owing to the nature of Shi'ite society, plus the rise of Khomeini-style fundamentalism, the traditional clergy or radical Islamist groups have been to the fore in this underground struggle.

The Kurds have a venerable tradition of armed rebellion. Since the Gulf war they have been the only opposition that remains firmly inside Iraq and — under Western aerial protection — falls outside Baghdad's control. But clan and regional rivalries have sparked bouts of virtual civil war between Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

The most promising effort to unite these disparate forces has come from the Iraqi National Congress, the brainchild of Dr Ahmad Chalabi, which seeks a "democratic and pluralist" Iraq. It first set itself up in "liberated" Kurdistan, but the inter-Kurdish strife contributed mightily to its decline. The Kurds are deeply reluctant to sacrifice the relative freedom and security they have achieved for the uncertainties of a new adventure to oust Saddam.

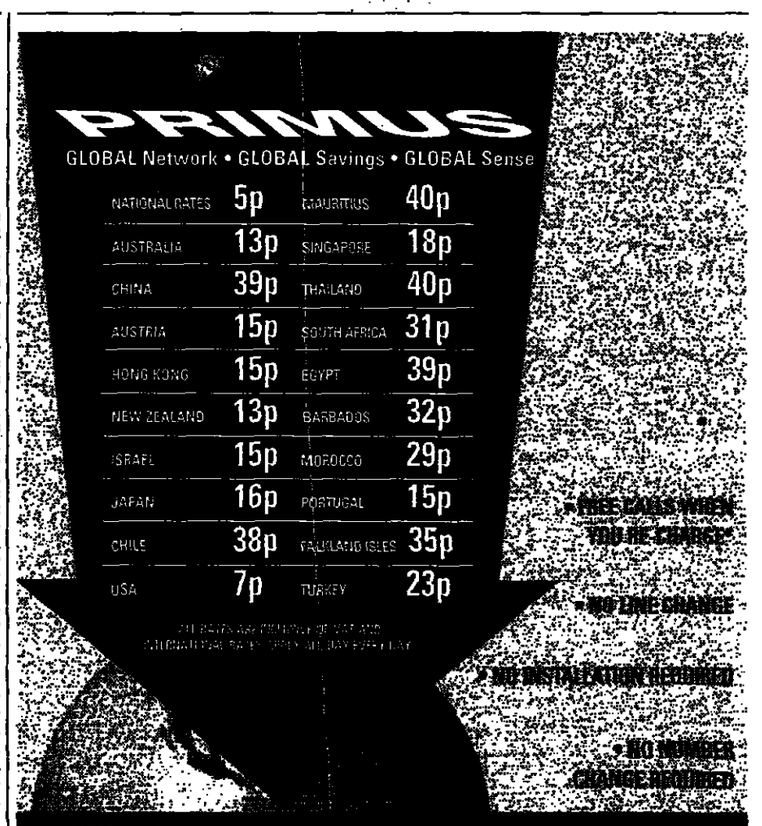
For all its divisions, much of the opposition acknowledges that it needs outside, especially US, support. So the Clinton administration's recent conversion to the idea of joining forces with the opposition to topple Saddam opens new possibilities.

The third and final danger comes from within. Along with a coup or an uprising, assassination or some convulsion within the House of Saddam is a third possible way for Saddam to go.

True, the normal response of insiders under threat is to rally round their chief more loyally than ever, knowing that if he goes, they go with him. But in a ruling elite as murderous as Saddam's there is surely someone who sooner or later is going to raise his hand against the Monster of Monsters.



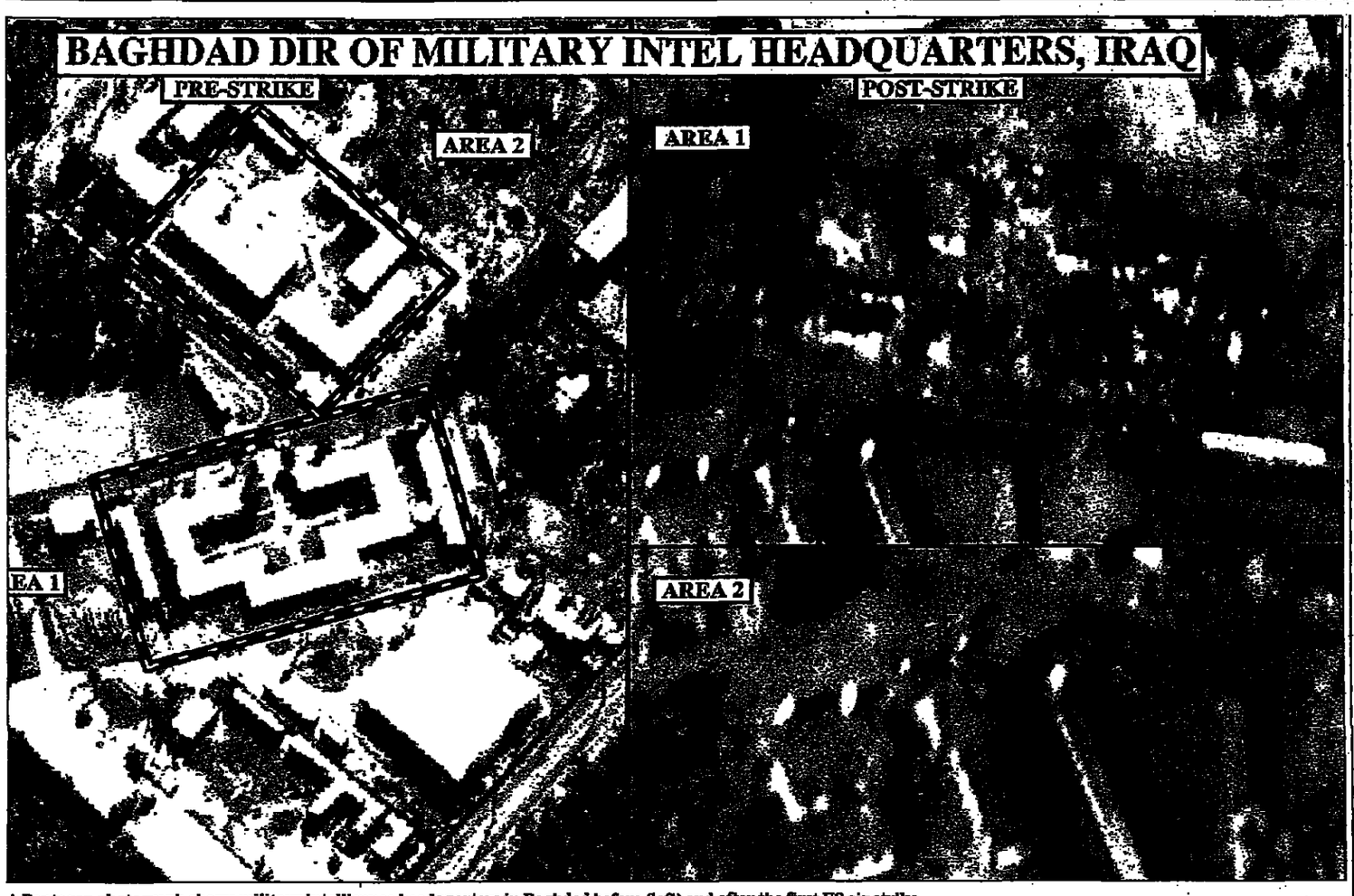
The more mistrustful he becomes, the more Saddam concentrates power in his sons Udai (left) and Qusai



Attack on Iraq

There are no air operations in which you can guarantee you will remove Saddam Hussein
Robin Cook





A Pentagon photograph shows military intelligence headquarters in Baghdad before (left) and after the first US air strike

British leap of faith

cratic allies warned that a storm of outrage would descend on him, but said he should just carry on. At 1pm, the president's top aides gathered again at the White House and signed off on the decision for the last time.

Just over two hours later, it was too late to change their minds — the Tomahawk cruise missiles on the ships furthest from Iraq had been launched on their two-hour flight, synchronised so many of the first volley of over 200 Tomahawks converged on their targets at the same time, just after 1am Baghdad time. They were followed by 70 marine and navy strike warplanes launched from the USS Enterprise aircraft-carrier, which had been patrolling the Gulf since November.

They were aimed not only at Iraq's ground-to-air missiles and command-and-control centres but at the perceived sinews of Saddam's power, the military intelligence headquarters in Baghdad and barracks just outside the capital, housing some of the 16,000-strong Special Republican Guard — an elite unit used (according to Unscom) to transport and hide Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

At 6pm, an exhausted president made a television address to the nation, explaining why he had to act when he did. President Saddam's weapons programmes posed a "clear and present danger" to the Gulf and people everywhere. He said the Muslim holy month of Ramadan would start at the weekend, and unleashing Operation Desert Fox then would jeopardise US relations with the Arab world.

In Britain, the Prime Minister offered unstinting support, offering a dozen Tornados and six reconnaissance planes. Yesterday, Tony Blair once more came to the president's defence, rejecting claims that the assault had been manipulated to suit President Clinton's domestic requirements.

The chief of the defence staff, General Sir Charles Guthrie, described the operation as the largest since the Gulf War in 1991. He said the objectives were twofold: to degrade President Saddam's capability to build and use weapons of mass destruction, and to diminish the military threat to his neighbours.

The general insisted the aim of Operation Desert Fox was not to "kill, capture or remove Saddam Hussein", adding that "Iraq is an enormous country and it would take many thousands of troops in a land campaign to have any chance of success."

The second wave of the attack yesterday included B52 bombers based on the British-run Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, land-based F16s, and the British Tornados.

Group Captain Steve Parkinson, a navigator on GR1 Tornado aircraft involved in the raids, said the jets were "highly efficient bombers" which carry missiles able to hit targets within a three-metre accuracy range. The head of the US joint chiefs of staff, General Hugh Shelton, said the Tornados and F16s could not be used on the first wave, for fear of alerting people in the Gulf states who could tip off air defences in Baghdad.

By last night, the time for surprise had passed. The sky over Baghdad lit up once more as missiles and bombs honed in on any targets left standing after the first wave. With at least another 24 hours of bombardment thought to be on the way and Republicans on Capitol Hill gearing up for a delayed impeachment vote, it was far from clear who would be in the stronger position once the dust had settled: Saddam Hussein or President Clinton.

Saddam's weapons posed 'clear danger'

Policy widens to toppling Saddam

WAR AIMS: Air strikes alone won't destroy Baghdad regime

Ian Black in London and Julian Borger in Washington

OPERATION Desert Fox is designed to degrade Saddam Hussein's ability to develop weapons of mass destruction and threaten his neighbours. But it is far from clear whether the United States and Britain have formulated any wider goals.

Officials in Washington were last night portraying the attacks as having broader aims than the punitive enforcement of UN resolutions, claiming a shift from containment alone to a dual policy of containment and toppling the Baghdad regime.

But exiled Iraqi opposition groups said they doubted whether the aerial pounding would have more than a short-lived effect if not accompanied by a comprehensive strategy to overthow Saddam.

And Britain made clear that it was not explicitly backing any such effort. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said only that it would be a "welcome bonus" if the Iraqi leader were removed.

"There is no air operation in which you can guarantee that you will remove Saddam Hussein," he admitted.

The unstated hope of both countries is to shake the regime by targeting the core of Saddam's power base, including the Revolutionary Guard, security forces, communications facilities, palaces and strongholds.

But using only air power, and without the readiness to commit ground troops, overthrow is no more an explicit goal than it was after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 and the bloody Kurdish and Shi'ite rebellions that followed.

In London, Foreign Office officials said the most immediate post-bombing question was about the future of the UN weapons inspectors at the heart of this crisis.

US officials believe that the UN special commission, Unscom, is all but dead, though there remains a slim chance that a chastened Saddam will give in, as before, and let the inspectors resume work.

Yet with or without Unscom, if Washington and London get their way, sanctions will remain in force. UN resolutions link the Iraqi oil embargo to the disarmament process, which the UN must certify is completed. So if Unscom cannot work, sanctions — imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 — remain in place.

Iraq's friends, especially Russia and France, are unlikely to accept this, even if they argue the case on the suffering of millions of ordinary Iraqis rather than their own interest in the lucrative business deals that will follow the lifting of sanctions.

So as the bombing continued yesterday the US and Britain were facing a confused transition between two policies — arms control with sanctions versus agressive containment — that are likely to co-exist for some time, though there is a danger that neither will work.

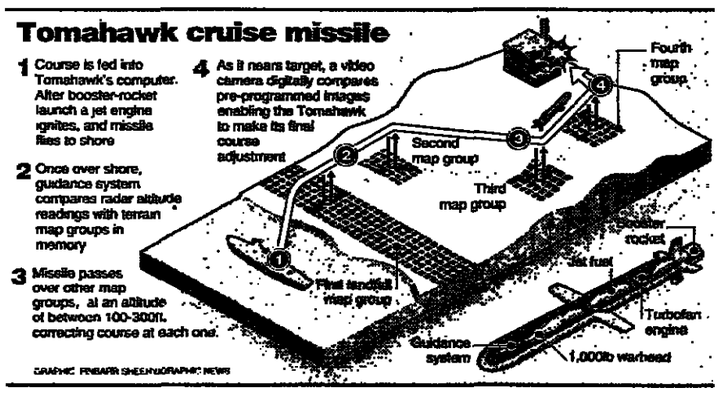
"I believe the only real solution is to remove Saddam," said Tim Trevan, a former Unscom official. "The US and UK are saying he has to be taught a lesson, but they are also saying they want Unscom back in an effective way.

"But they say this is all in support of Unscom, so until they are ready to move to another strategy of regime destabilisation or pure containment, I don't see that they can write it off yet."

William Quandt, a former National Security Council official, said: "My qualms are about what happens the day after the bombing stops. Saddam's a disaster, but will this get rid of him?

"We know what we want but we're not prepared to pay the price to do it. Bombing is the compromise choice that makes us feel better."

The US policy shift was set out on December 8 by the president's national security adviser, Sandy Berger. He told an academic audience at Stanford university: "Even a contained Saddam is harmful to stability and to positive change in the region ... Through constant confrontation, our policy of containing Iraq has been successful. But that does not mean that by itself it is sustainable over the long run."



Deadly from land, air or sea, the 550mph smart missile that can think for itself – at least in theory

Tim Radford Science Editor

THE Tomahawk missile is the US military machine's all-purpose arm's-length weapon. It is a 20ft-long cruise missile — an armed but pilotless rocket-assisted jet — rather than a ballistic missile, which accelerates to the edge of space and down again.

Cruise missiles fly low, which limits their range and speed. In theory, they can fly low enough to avoid detection by ground-based radar until the last minute. They can be launched from the ground, from bombers, or ships and submarines. They can be armed with conventional explosives, nuclear devices or even chemical weapons.

The range from ground or sea is about 1,000 miles. Those fired from a B-52 with the advantage of extra height can reach 1,500 miles. The cruising speed is about 550 miles an hour.

Their first outing in anger was the Gulf war of 1991. In theory, no one can see them coming; in theory, they are armed and dangerous and smart: that is, the missile's course and target are fed into its onboard computer when the warhead is primed. The course is guided by global positioning satellite systems that can pinpoint any moving object to about 30 feet.

In practice, the missile is only as accurate as its onboard map and its guidance system. During the 1991 war, American forces launched 297 Tomahawks. Nine never left the launch tubes, six fell straight into the sea, and at least two were shot down.



'Even a contained Saddam is harmful to stability in the region'
Sandy Berger, national security adviser, left

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Attack on Iraq

We saw only one moment of real passion, when he (Blair) defended his friend Bill Clinton
Simon Hoggart







Tony Benn, left, in the Commons criticising the attacks, and demonstrators at a candle-lit vigil outside Downing Street

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH JEFF MOORE

PM defends timing of raids

THE COMMONS: Tony Blair speaks up for beleaguered ally, and wins overwhelming support of MPs, reports **Michael White**

TONY Blair went out of his way yesterday to defend President Bill Clinton from charges that he had timed the Anglo-US air attacks to distract world attention away from his looming impeachment by the United States Congress.

In a statement to MPs ahead of last night's emergency debate on the Iraqi crisis, he said: "There are suggestions that the timing of military action is somehow linked to the internal affairs of the US. I refute this entirely." To have delayed the attacks for Mr Clinton's domestic political reasons "would have been a dereliction of his duty as president ... He has shown the courage to do the right thing and he has my full support."

The Prime Minister then won the overwhelming support of the Commons, echoed in the Lords, from the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and nationalist benches, and most Labour MPs.

With leftwingers promising to force a late night vote, ministers were adamant they were trying to "diminish and degrade" Saddam Hussein's military arsenal and potential to threaten his neighbours — and would attack it again without warning if he attempted to rebuild it.

But they insisted they were not trying to kill Saddam, though the removal of his "evil regime" would be an acceptable outcome, Mr Blair conceded.

William Hague proferred Tory support. But George Galloway and the veteran former cabinet minister, Tony Benn, savaged the policy which Mr Galloway said would be more likely to "diminish and degrade" the nations which bombed Iraqi civilians than to restore peace.

In a bitter exchange Mr Galloway, the MP for Hillhead and a persistent apologist for Iraq against UN sanctions, accused the West of launching a new crusade, led not by Richard the Lionheart, but by "Bill the Liar". With Labour MPs interrupting him the MP said: "This is a free parliament and I will have my say."

Stung by his words Mr Blair conceded that right, but protested that Mr Galloway had uttered not one word of condemnation of Saddam, a brutal oppressor of his own people. Mr Benn later declared: "On the condemnation of Saddam Hussein, there is overwhelming, unanimous world opinion."

But he warned ministers: "On the decision to take military action, you and the US have been unable to persuade the United Nations Security Council to go along with it. Therefore this military action is a flagrant breach of Article 46 of the Charter of the United Nations."

But even before the small group of Labour leftwingers launched an assault upon the policy — illegal under international law, cruel and unwise, they said — Mr Blair made a pre-emptive declaration in support of his beleaguered ally in the White House. He did the same during a visit to the US last autumn.

After outlining the protracted campaign of delay and deceipt by Saddam since promising to destroy his weapons of mass destruction in 1991, Mr Blair told a sombre Commons that "action is fully justified now". He added that waiting until after the Muslim holy festival of Ramadan would be "highly risky in military terms and likely to reduce significantly the effect of our attacks".

The timetable had been dictated by Unscom's chief weapons inspector, Richard Butler, who had promised a report on progress within a month of Saddam's last promise to comply with the UN Security Council's resolutions — on November 16 — and had now produced his damning indictment.

The thrust of Mr Blair's text, reiterated in detail by Robin Cook, when the Foreign Secretary opened the subsequent debate, was that the peace of the world, as well as the Middle East, was threatened by Saddam's persistence in building up his stockpiles. Unscom had destroyed 38,000 chemical weapon munitions, 48 Scud missiles and a factory capable of producing 50,000 litres of anthrax, botulism toxin and other poisons.

Yet much remained unaccounted for, Mr Blair told MPs. It was "vital that people understand that the threat from Saddam Hussein is real, not theoretical", and the UN weapons inspectors had been "constantly harassed, threatened, deceived, and lied to".

Mr Blair warned: "Saddam attaches importance to only one thing: his ability to dominate his people and his neighbours by military force. He wants to retain all the weapons he can, including weapons of mass destruction. He has used them before. I am in no doubt of his readiness to use them again."

Anticipating leftwing complaints about the starvation in Iraq, he said Baghdad could still use oil revenues to buy food and medicine. "If there are nutritional problems in Iraq they are not the result of sanctions — let us not forget Iraq is continuing to export food to her neighbours."

Mr Cook said Saddam had imposed fresh restrictions since the stand-off last month and the UN inspectors had faced "even greater forms of deception and obstruction than before". He added: "If we have erred, it has always been on the side of caution.

"We want a peaceful outcome. But we know that an outcome which left Saddam able to develop those weapons of mass destruction without hindrance would not be a peaceful outcome. It would guarantee that those weapons would be used. Saddam has used these weapons before. He will use them again if he is allowed to keep them."



The policy is more likely to diminish and degrade the nations which bombed Iraqi civilians than to restore peace

George Galloway, left

Are Britain and the US right to bomb Iraq? Have your say on the Guardian's website at: http://reports.guardian.co.uk/iraq

Sketch

Blair boosted by Bad Fairy of Baghdad



Simon Hoggart

"The Prime Minister has our full support ... we support his decision ... we offer our complete support." And that was just William Hague.

Members rivalled each other to provide even more support than whoever spoke before them. Even the mere suggestion that the attack might have just something to do with President Clinton's domestic difficulties left Gerald Kaufman "nauseated".

While the Prime Minister struggled to remain upright as this tidal wave of support swept over him, I reflected that it had taken a war to bring about the triumph of Blairism.

For in Tonyland we all agree with each other, and we all support each other. There are no tedious arguments to get in the way, no nit-picking or pointless cavilling. We all stand together, arm in arm.

Now, if he can pull the same trick with the economy or on House of Lords reform, then he really will have accomplished his final ambition: to abolish party politics and replace it with hugging.

He began his statement by saying that the attack had been launched on Wednesday night, "maximising surprise". (Surprise, that is, if Saddam had not been aware of Prime Minister's Questions this week, or had not noticed that President Clinton was in trouble again.)

Mr Blair spoke calmly and undramatically, interrupted only by an occasional "Yurr yurr" at the more telling sound-bites: "Saddam Hussein is a man to whom a last chance to do right is just a further opportunity to do wrong."

We saw only one moment of real passion, when he defended his friend Bill Clinton. There were those, he said, who suggested that the military action was linked to what he discreetly termed "the internal affairs of the United States. I refute this entirely. Not for the first time, he has shown the courage to do the right thing, and he has my full support." "Yurr, yurr" went the MPs again, like old men waking from a disturbed sleep.

Questions began with Mr Hague offering so much support in so many different ways. Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat spokesman, gave his support. Tom King, a former defence secretary, endorsed everyone else's support. Betty Boothroyd kicked her shoes off. She does when she's enjoying herself. A cup of tea and a biscuit would have made her pleasure complete.

Gerald Kaufman, in his best Hannibal Lecter mode, spoke slowly, solemnly, supportively (and spookily) about "the nausea felt by many of us ... that there are those who. Suggest. This. Is. A kind of cronyish decision for his friend, the. President. Of. The. United. States." We shuddered appropriately and thought of fava beans and chianti.

Like the Sleeping Beauty, Mr Blair found that his Bad Fairy was really a blessing in disguise. The first person to disagree with anything he had said was George Galloway, the Labour MP known to his colleagues, not affectionately, as the member for Baghdad South.

Thanks largely to his 1994 appearance on Iraqi TV, in which he told Saddam to his face: "Sir ... I want you to know that we are with you to victory," Mr Galloway's support nowadays discredits whatever cause he supports.

"As I watched the bleeding women and children carried into hospital, I thought those who were diminished and degraded were us." This was a new crusade, "led not by Richard the Lionheart, but Clinton the Liar".

"Disgraceful!" someone muttered. "This is a free Parliament, and I will have my say!" announced Mr Galloway, dramatically but absurdly, since no one had tried to stop him.

Mr Blair pointed out mildly that he would not have had the same privilege in Iraq, and pondered in a puzzled sort of way why Mr Galloway had no criticism for Saddam. It was the soft answer which, I am sure, only stokes Mr Galloway's wrath.

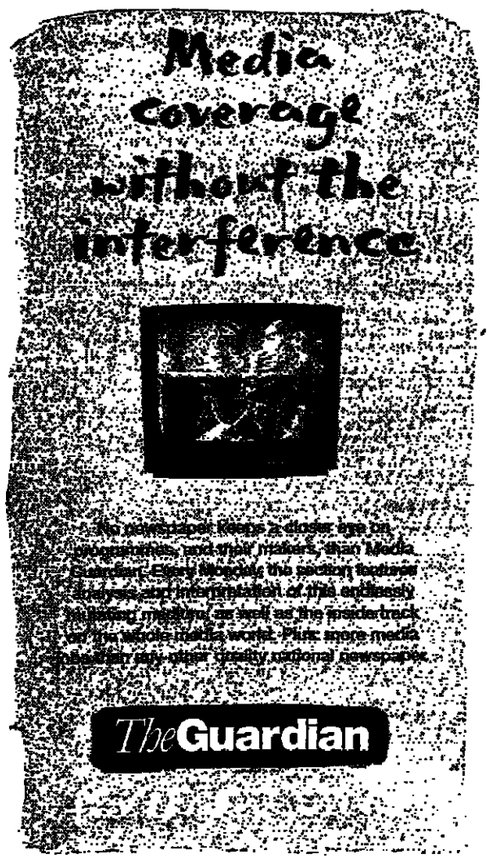
Later Tony Benn gave us one of his majestic white-haired prophet rants, drawing in Vietnam, the Munich agreement and the menace of Victorian imperialism.

At one point Christopher Leslie, a New Labour MP, inquired what he would do to disarm Saddam.

"The solution is very simple. The sanctions should be lifted!" said Mr Benn, to a sound unfamiliar to him — jeering laughter.

When he added: "It's a difficult thing to vote against your own government," his own side fell about.

It is perhaps his final stage of life: from angry maverick, to respected elder statesman, to the butt of mockery. Yet it does leave open the question: why on earth should the bombings even begin to disarm Saddam?



Chorus of condemnation

WORLD REACTION: Growing international demand for an end to air strikes and a return to diplomacy to solve the crisis

Jonathan Steele and Tom Whitehouse

A GROWING chorus of world opinion moved against the United States missile attacks on Iraq yesterday with countries such as Italy, India, Sweden and South Africa joining the criticism voiced by three permanent members of the UN Security Council, France, Russia, and China, in the first hours after the raids.

In the Middle East there was broad condemnation and calls for a halt to the bombing. Even Kuwait, invaded by Iraq in 1990, declined to support to the US.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the world's biggest Muslim group, urged an immediate halt to strikes. The OIC, based in the Saudi city of Jeddah, said its secretary-general, Azeddine Laraki, urgently appealed for "an immediate halt to military action, and a return to dialogue to spare the Iraqi people more suffering".

The Vatican said the air strikes marked "a sad day for the United Nations and for the world".

The most bellicose noises were made by the president of Russia's rebellious Chechenia province, where three British hostages were killed last week. President Aslan Maskhadov yesterday said: "We reserve the right to launch a no less significant strike against the interests of the USA and Great Britain in the Caucasus region, in Russia and in the Middle East." There are several British oil companies working in nearby Azerbaijan and a British firm is building an oil pipeline across neighbouring Georgia.

Russia also opposed the attacks. Mr Yeltsin spoke by telephone with his fellow Security Council sceptics, the presidents of China and France, in the hope of presenting a united front against the US.

He said the strikes had come just as the Security Council was beginning to solve the Iraq problem.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin called on the US and Britain to end air strikes and create conditions for negotiations to end the crisis, state television said.

France blamed Saddam Hussein for provoking the crisis but failed to support the attacks. The French foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, defended France's position that a diplomatic solution should be sought to standoffs with Iraq. "France deplores the spiral of events that led to the American military strikes and the grave human consequences they could have on the Iraqi population. But Saddam Hussein is the person who bears the main responsibility for the conflict."

Among bigger nations Germany, Japan, Canada, and Australia strongly supported the bombing.

India said the strikes undermined the authority of the Security Council and called for an immediate halt to raids. "This attack raises serious questions regarding the functioning of the collective and consultative procedures of the UN Security Council," Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told parliament.

Italy said it would ask the United States and Britain to halt attacks and let the United Nations deal with the crisis.

South Africa said military force would not solve the conflict between UN weapons inspectors and Baghdad. The foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, said South Africa supported Security Council resolutions for Iraq to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, but the strikes "would inevitably lead to greater human suffering for the people of Iraq".

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sartaj Aziz, called the strikes "a deplorable act".

Most Arab governments took a similar line. The Palestinian Authority urged Arab states to convene an emergency summit to call for an immediate end to the raids.

Arab League officials said it would hold an emergency meeting at the weekend at Iraq's request to discuss the strikes.

Iran said one of its southern cities was hit by a stray missile, causing damage but no casualties. It said the strikes would worsen the suffering of the Iraqi people and increase regional instability.

Iraq's Gulf Arab neighbours also voiced concern. An Oman Foreign Ministry spokesman urged Iraq to show more readiness to co-operate with the UN. And Qatar hoped that, as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approached, "a peaceful solution to this crisis could be reached to spare the Iraqi people a lot of misery and the region more tension".

Fatalism takes hold in Baghdad

continued from page 1

middle-class villa in el-Adil, a new suburb north of Baghdad. It looked as if a landmine had sneaked in through the back window and exploded.

At 1am, because his children were frightened by the sounds of the missiles, Jassam had gathered the family in one room. He recalled drifting into sleep, his last thoughts for his two-week-old son Mohamed. "I remember nothing else, only my wife coming to me and taking the ceiling off my body and me asking her, 'Where is my child?' " Then he had blacked out.

The baby boy was fine and being cared for by neighbours, according to his brother, Kadim. The problem was his nine-year-old daughter Suzanne, who had been transferred to a neurological intensive care ward. "She's dying," whispered Kadim.

Jassam said: "I want to ask the American people and the English people, what have the Iraqi people done to you so that you punish us like this? I love my country and I love my Saddam. I ask Saddam to take revenge for me. For the sake of Saddam I will sacrifice myself and my children."

The minders were nervous when we asked to visit Jihad and the home of the dead teenage boy. They could not get an address from the hospital and besides, one admitted, there might be a military installation in the area.

This was the background to our tour of the damaged centres of Baghdad. The truth is that they are few and far between and, harrowing though the stories of Jassam and others are, they are the unfortunate exceptions. Most civilians were unscathed.

The government-owned newspaper al-Qadissiya said in an editorial: "Iraqis are pulling together to go forward to bury the strikes of aggression and continue their new crusade to teach the enemy lessons which they will never forget."

The truth was more prosaic. Baghdad was quiet yesterday, but its citizens were getting on with their lives. Children were playing football in side streets while women were shopping for fruit and vegetables. Everyone was waiting to see what the night would bring.

Tomorrow The Guardian EUROPE offers the complete package including Saturday, the section which brings you book reviews, arts, interviews and features for the weekend. Plus six pages of sport.
+ European weather + Television and Radio + Crosswords + Cartoons + Britain's best columnists

Carlton's lawyer quits over 'faked film' controversy

Janine Gibson
Media Correspondent

THE last remaining Carlton Television staff member directly involved with the faked documentary The Connection has resigned.

The company's chief lawyer, Don Christopher, yesterday announced his resignation as regulators on the Independent Television Commission met to decide sanctions against the ITV company over the documentary.

Mr Christopher, who was criticised by the Guardian when the newspaper exposed the film as false, will leave next month after six years with the company.

This month Carlton produced its own report after an inquiry into the making and faking of The Connection. It concluded that the programme was largely false, uncovering nearly 20 deceptions.

The report said that as the executive in charge of compliance with the rules governing ITV, Mr Christopher was guilty of "serious failing". At the time he rejected its criticisms, although he was quoted in the report as saying he bitterly regretted some of his actions.

In particular he knew that a crucial plane journey was filmed in two legs, six months apart, but failed to insist on making that clear to viewers.

He also claimed that he did not recall whether he had read the programme researcher's statement, given to him six days before the programme was transmitted, which alleged that it contained serious deception.

In a statement issued by Carlton, Mr Christopher said: "Following the publication of The Connection report, I have come to the conclusion that as a matter of principle and honour I should resign from the company."

Carlton Television's chief executive, Clive Jones, who was on the fact-finding team in the inquiry, said: "Don Christopher has given outstanding service to Carlton since it won its licence in 1992, and while I understand his actions I accept his resignation with great regret."

The ITC, which will tomorrow announce sanctions against Carlton, might be expected to take a dimmer view of Mr Christopher's role in the documentary. As compliance officer, he is responsible for ensuring that Carlton programmes comply with the ITC's code.

Since the Guardian first published its case against The Connection in May, Carlton's director of programmes, Andy Allan, and controller of factual programmes, Steve Clark, have left. The film's executive producer, Roger James, has also left Carlton. Marc de Beaufort, producer of The Connection, was a freelance contracted to work on specific programmes.

One industry observer said yesterday: "Carlton has now done all it can to make amends for The Connection internally. None of the people who were involved are still there and the report has been published. Now it's up to the ITC."



Jane Root, former head of BBC's independent commissioning group, 'taking over a successful BBC2, with no hit list' PHOTOGRAPH MARTIN ARGLES

Priest lied about taking virginity of former nun

Gerard Seenan
Scotland Correspondent

ONE of Britain's most senior Roman Catholic priests was accused of lying in court yesterday by a former nun who claims she lost her virginity to him in a Preston hotel room.

Caroline Brown, aged 38, said Father Noel Barry, press secretary to Cardinal Thomas Winning, the Archbishop of Glasgow, had lied under oath about their relationship during questioning about a night they spent together in Preston's Crest Hotel in 1985.

Father Barry fidgeted in his chair as, only a few yards away Mrs Brown told Edinburgh Sheriff Court that the pair had embarked on a sexual relationship between 1984 and 1985.

Mrs Brown, who is now a married with two children, told the court that she began a relationship with Father Barry two years after she left her Franciscan order near Glasgow in 1982. The relationship ended when Father Barry failed to leave the priesthood as he had promised.

When the Sun newspaper contacted her about the relationship in 1996, shortly after the paper had published a story about the priest's friendship with a school teacher, Annie Clinton, she sought help from Cardinal Winning.

A deeply embarrassed Mrs Brown said she was not being paid for her story, nor was there any promise of payment, and she had decided to make a witness statement for the Sun newspaper on the advice of her lawyer in the hope that it would not reach court.

The Sun's publisher, News Group News, is being sued for £200,000 by both Father Barry and Ms Clinton for defamation over a story published in September 1996 which they allege implied a sexual relationship between them.

Mrs Brown told the court how she first met Father Barry while she was still a nun in 1981. The priest had come to tea at her religious order.

"He flirted overtly with me. I remember being taken aback. He clearly didn't want me to leave the room, he kept chatting me up," she said.

The pair did not meet again until Mrs Brown had left her order. Mrs Brown recognised Father Barry at mass in 1984.

The mass, said Mrs Brown, finished quickly. The priest introduced himself and they arranged to meet for coffee. After a "tactile" initial meeting, Mrs Brown and the priest began their relationship. Furtively, they would go for long drives in the car and stop off in local woodlands

"We were in a relationship boyfriend-girlfriend style. It was all very cloak and dagger. We loved each other," said Mrs Brown.

What began as a platonic relationship quickly became sexual. They dreamed of making love together and waking up side by side so Father Barry booked a room at the Crest Hotel in Preston. It was here they first had intercourse, said Mrs Brown.

When Neil Davidson QC, for the Sun, said that earlier this week Father Barry had denied they had sex, she replied: "He has lied under oath about our relationship."

When Father Barry did not leave the priesthood, Mrs Brown returned a ring and asked Father Barry to close a bank account he had opened for them.

During cross examination Paul Cullen QC, for Father Barry and Ms Clinton, cast doubt on Mrs Brown's memory of events. He asked her if she had lied about having sex with Father Barry. "I am here to tell the total truth," she replied. A verdict is expected today.





Caroline Brown says she was chatted up by Father Noel Barry (right), and had sex with after leaving her convent

Woman wins 'best job in television' as BBC2 chief

Janine Gibson
Media Correspondent

JANE Root yesterday became the BBC's first female channel controller, as she was awarded "the best job in television" — head of BBC2.

Miss Root, aged 41, was appointed by BBC director of television Alan Yentob, to whom she yesterday paid tribute as the inventor of the modern BBC2.

Emphasising she was taking over a successful BBC2, Miss Root said she did not have a hit list of areas to tackle.

In her previous role as head of the BBC's independent commissioning group, she has been responsible for commissioning and overseeing productions from independent companies.

She joined the BBC last year to create the independent group. Before that she was joint managing director of her own successful production company, Wall to Wall Television, making drama and factual programmes for the BBC and Channel 4. In 1995, she chaired the Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival.

Miss Root will take over the channel, with a £372 million annual budget, at the beginning of next year. She succeeds Mark Thompson, promoted to director of national and regional broadcasting.

Mr Yentob emphasised yesterday that the appointment was not one of tokenism, although both leading candidates were women. "We appointed the very best person for the job. No one condescends with these kinds of jobs. In the BBC we now have a number of senior, creative executives who are women."

Miss Root said that running BBC2 "is undoubtedly the best job in television, at the creative heart of the country". It was both "scary and exciting" to take over the channel.

Asked if she felt a responsibility to other women in television, Miss Root said: "The responsibility is really to the audience. I think it's great that there are many more women around, but I didn't get this job because I'm a woman."

Nurse denies theft

Gerard Seenan
Scotland Correspondent

LUCILLE McLauchlan, the nurse imprisoned in a Saudi jail for her part in the murder of an Australian colleague, was yesterday accused of stealing a bank card from an elderly patient in her care.

Ms McLauchlan — who is charged under her married name of Ferrie — is alleged to have stolen a bank card from Helen Lewis, aged 79.

Mrs Lewis was Ms McLauchlan's patient when she worked as a senior staff nurse at King's Cross hospital, Dundee, in 1996.

Mrs Lewis's son, John, aged 52, told Dundee sheriff court that he had packed his mother's belongings, including the purse where she normally kept her bank card, before she went into hospital in March 1996.

But when he went to his mother's home in St Andrew's to check the mail, he noticed that large sums of money were missing from her account and he called in police.

The court was shown video evidence allegedly of Ms McLauchlan withdrawing money from a Bank of Scotland cash machine in Nethergate, Dundee, at 7.56am on March 11, 1996. Bank records revealed that four withdrawals totalling £300 were made using Mrs Lewis's card at around that time.

Ann Dalgety, personal banking manger at the Bank of Scotland, said that video tapes with time and date references allowed them to match up transactions with the person.

Under examination from deputy fiscal Nigel Orr, Detective Constable Graeme Collin told the court the circumstances around the crime had led him to speak to nursing managers at the hospitals where Ms McLauchlan worked.

He had identified Ms McLauchlan from the video footage. But when she was questioned by police, she could not say why she was withdrawing cash.

Ms McLauchlan, aged 33, from Dundee, and now four months pregnant, married her boyfriend, Grant Ferrie, while held in jail in Saudi Arabia.

She is accused of stealing a bank card and a diary in March 1996 and of stealing £1,960 using the stolen card. She is also accused of getting her job in Saudi Arabia by submitting false claims in an application form to a nursing recruitment agency and offering forged references. She denies all the charges.

The trial continues.

Opera House given cash with caveat

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

THE Royal Opera House was given a long awaited cash boost yesterday when the Arts Council of England announced a package to increase funding over the next three years.

The company's grant will rise 11 per cent to £16 million for next year, and then up to £20 million in the two subsequent years.

However the extra funding may not be delivered in full because the reopening of the House — originally set for next December — has been put back to March 2000.

Announcing the extra funding, Gerry Robinson, the Arts Council chairman, warned that the conditions of the grant included opening on time and on budget.

"No money will be released until we are satisfied by the plans artistically and operationally. There are a series of things laid out and this increase is conditional upon those things being achieved. We want the new House open on time and on budget. Any delay in opening would have an impact."

Mr Robinson also attacked the Government's decision announced this week to set up an arts watchdog, Quest, the Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team. "I'm in favour of improving standards but this is the worst possible way of going about it," he said. "It's a typical approach of government that you have to have another quango."

The details of Quest's mission remain hazy. But it will be responsible for improving standards of efficiency and management across the arts sector, and will initially be placed under the jurisdiction of the department of culture.

The good news for the House continued with the announcement that its music director, Sir Bernard Haitink, has withdrawn his resignation.

The increase in the budget is substantially lower than the company's chairman, Sir Colin Southgate, had demanded. In a letter to the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, in July he had insisted that without an increase of £15 million the House would have to close. It is understood that the House's deficit could rise to about £25 million by the time of reopening.

The extra funding follows a £30 million increase in the Government's grant to the Arts Council. The increase also enabled the Arts Council to give substantial rises across the board, thus deflecting any criticism the House decision may have attracted.

The Royal National theatre will receive an additional £1 million next year, a 9 per cent increase, bringing its grant to £12.2 million. The Royal Shakespeare Company will receive a 5 per cent increase, bringing its grant to £8.9 million. English National Opera receives a £500,000 rise, while the South Bank Centre will be given an extra £660,000 from next year.

However there was concern that funding for many smaller theatre companies has been frozen.

Nicola Thorold, director of the Independent Theatre Council, said: "Investing in the Opera House and ill-defined development programmes, while effectively cutting the companies delivering the Arts Council's supposed new objectives is the wrong way for the Arts Council to re-inspire the confidence of the arts community."

Straw launches broader laws against terrorism

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

ANIMAL rights groups, Islamic militants and extreme Scottish and Welsh nationalists who are involved in serious acts of violence face being banned under anti-terrorist powers unveiled by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, last night.

The proposed powers make it a criminal offence to be a member or supporter of such organisations. Tough action will also be taken against those who raise funds for the proscribed groups. At present only such bodies as the Real IRA are banned.

The new powers are the result of a review of anti-terrorist laws in Britain — laws which will be put on a permanant footing and apply across the UK.

The package will mean the end of the annual renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was aimed principally at Northern Irish paramilitaries. Mr Straw is to retain the power of proscription for Irish terrorism but is proposing to abolish the use of internal exclusion orders, which ban individuals from travelling from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK.

The Northern Irish "Diplock" courts, which sit without juries, are to be phased out. The period during which a terrorist suspect can be held by police without the approval of a judge or magistrate is likely to be reduced from seven to four days.



Jack Straw . . . terrorism a 'dismal reality'

The proposed anti-terrorist law provides a definition of terrorism similar to that used by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. It extends current emergency powers to include any kind of terrorism, not just that related to Northern Ireland or international terrorism. It includes acts that stop short of violence, such as damage to buildings.

It also covers "causing serious disruption", such as attacks on computer installations or corrupting data through computer hacking.

The new definition includes "the use of serious violence against persons or property, or the threat to use such violence to intimidate or coerce a government, the public or any section of the public for political, religious or ideological ends" but also includes "serious disruption".

Mr Straw said it was a "dismal reality" that terrorism would not disappear in the foreseeable future. It was not only Middle East fanatics who had religious motivations: the legislation would also cover, for example, the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult, which staged a sarin gas attack in the Tokyo underground in 1995

Animal rights and environmental activists are regarded as a growing threat. Last year 800 incidents were logged on the Animal Rights National Index, including attacks on abattoirs, breeders, butchers and restaurants causing £1.8 million of damage.

The threat from nationalist extremists is seen to be declining, although there have been 40 letter or parcel bomb incidents in the past five years. The Home Office says the powers are needed to deal with the possibility of other groups, such as anti-abortion campaigners, adopting violent methods.

John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil liberties campaign, said extending the powers of proscription meant it would be an offence to be a member of a group without taking part in real crime. "There is a danger this will make criminals out of many of those who join together to campaign for democracy or human rights abroad."

Branson set to start new round the world balloon flight today

Will Woodward
in Marrakesh

RICHARD Branson was planning to begin a circumnavigation of the globe today in a balloon which will fly from Morocco over Algeria, Libya, Syria, Iran and then, roughly 48 hours on, take him at 30,000 feet some 50-100 miles north of Iraq.

In a similar attempt last year his balloon snapped free of its guy ropes and flew off without him.

Yesterday the Virgin boss and his two co-pilots, Per Lindstrand and Steve Fossett, said they were confident they could avoid Iraq by travelling over Turkmenistan.

They hope the jetstream will take their ICO Global balloon at about 120mph past Iraq in about two hours. They have some room for manoeuvre and could take evasive action if required because of the war, even if it meant losing a day in taking a detour. Mr Branson said they were "99 per cent certain to fly".

If all goes well, ICO Global will cross the South China Sea then the US and the Atlantic, and land in his Oxfordshire garden on New Year's Day.

The project team decided on Tuesday to aim for lift-off today, and had no warning of the air strikes. "Ours is a peaceful mission," said Mr Branson, aged 48. "I would appreciate it if they [the US and Britain] are sending any missiles to keep us in mind. We will not get in their way."

Much of the promotional work the balloon crew will be doing on the voyage will be targeted at children, with a daily diary being posted for them by Mr Branson on the ICO global website.

Mr Fossett, 54, an American millionaire who has made the four longest balloon voyages in history, linked up with the team after narrowly failing in his solo effort to circle the globe when he crashed into the South Pacific in August.

Boots employees charged over baby's death

TWO employees of Boots the Chemist have been charged with manslaughter after the death of a three-week-old boy, police confirmed yesterday.

Matthew Young died after taking peppermint water prescribed to treat wind. It was dispensed at the Boots store at Hallwood health centre in Runcorn, Cheshire.

A woman, aged 27, and a man, 24, who have not been named, were bailed to appear before Halton magistrates in Runcorn on January 19.

Matthew was born at Warrington general hospital on April 25 and died on May 17 in Alder Hey children's hospital, Liverpool.

A Boots spokeswoman said: "Our deepest sympathies continue to be with Matthew's family. We continue to support these members of staff, who have transferred to other duties. We are not in a position to comment."

As the Pinochet case is ordered to be re-heard, Irvine demands measures to ensure such a situation never recurs. **Clare Dyer** reports

Hoffmann silence dismays judges

THE failure of Lord Hoffmann to disclose long-standing links with Amnesty International before hearing an appeal by the former Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet, against a High Court ruling that he was immune from prosecution, has embarrassed and angered senior judges.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, has demanded measures to ensure that no such threat to confidence in the impartiality of the justice system ever recurs.

Yesterday's House of Lords decision to reconsider the case was the first time a Lords judgment has ever been set aside, and allegations of a conflict of interest have never before been made against such a senior judge.

Lord Hoffmann, a longtime director of Amnesty's fundraising arm, ruled with two other judges that immunity did not extend to crimes against humanity, overturning the High Court judgment by a three-two majority. The ruling on November 25 paved the way for the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to start the process which could end in Pinochet's extradition to Spain to stand trial for human rights crimes during his 1973-90 rule.

Yesterday's decision, following a petition by Pinochet's lawyers, has dramatically increased his chance of freedom.

The case is a severe embarrassment to the legal establishment. The now-discredited judgment had been hailed as a breakthrough around the world.

'It shows the real desire and intention to respect the legal rights of everyone'

It also comes at a sensitive time, when the judicial appointments system and judges' political views are coming under closer examination. Pressure is growing for more public scrutiny of judges in the run-up to implementation of the Human Rights Act, which will require them to adopt a more overtly political role.

On Wednesday Lord Irvine wrote to the senior law lord, Lord Browne-Wilkinson, demanding measures to prevent such a situation recurring.

"We must make every effort to ensure that such a state of affairs could not occur again," he wrote. Judges chosen to rehear the case next month must disclose any possible conflict of interest to the other judges and the parties in the case. Any judge with a possible conflict must step down if a party objects or the other judges so decide.

Five current and former law lords — Lords Browne-Wilkinson, Hutton, Hope, Goff and Nolan — yesterday rescinded the November 25 judgment that Pinochet was not immune from extradition and prosecution for crimes committed when he was head of state.

The five unanimously set aside the 3-2 decision in which Lords Hoffmann, Steyn and Nicholls ruled against Pinochet and Lords Slynn and Lloyd held that he was protected by sovereign immunity as a former head of state.

The judges held that Lord Hoffmann should have stood down because Amnesty International, which has long campaigned for Pinochet to be tried, had been allowed to intervene, and, through its QC, strongly pressed the case for denying sovereign immunity to former heads of state for crimes against humanity.

The affair is embarrassing for South African-born Lord Hoffmann. As well as delivering a blow to the reputation of British justice, he has been responsible for two extra, expensive hearings.

Lord Hoffmann has been a director of Amnesty International Charity Limited, the human rights group's fundraising arm, since 1990, and more recently its chairman. His wife Gillian has worked for Amnesty for more than 20 years.

Andy McIntee, Amnesty's chairman, said the organisation was disappointed, but added: "We always said we would accept the outcome of the hearing and we have no problem with it now."

Reed Brody, spokesman for the New York-based Human Rights Watch, said: "Pinochet, like everybody else, is entitled to due process of law. But it's a rich irony that a dictator whose clandestine war tribunals ordered the execution of hundreds of political opponents is now taking advantage of the full measure of the British rule of law."

Michael Caplan, Pinochet's solicitor, made no comment, but Fernando Barros, a Chilean law professor living in London and a friend of the Pinochet family, said: "It was a very brave decision for the law lords to make. It shows the real desire and intention to respect the legal rights of everyone."

The shadow home secretary, Norman Fowler, urged his opposite number, Jack Straw, to throw out the extradition case. "We have witnessed blunder after blunder. This case should now be brought to an end."

Lord Hoffmann, who is abroad until after Christmas, has not explained why he failed to disclose the connection, in breach of a long-standing practice among judges to disclose even a remote possibility of a conflict of interest.

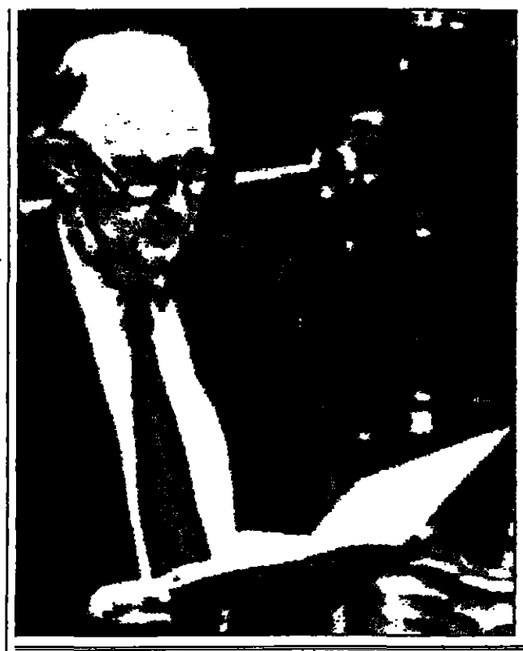
Detailed reasons for the decision to set the judgment aside will be given in the new year. Lord Browne-Wilkinson said: "Shortly stated, in the special circumstances of this case, including the fact that Amnesty International was joined as intervener and appeared by counsel before the appellate committee, Lord Hoffmann, who did not disclose his links with Amnesty International, was disqualified from sitting."

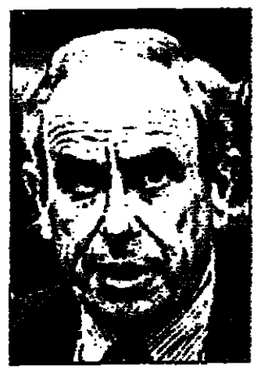
A new panel of judges will be convened to hear the fresh appeal, probably on January 18 or 19. It was unclear yesterday whether the five who set the judgment aside will go on to hear the new appeal.

One possibility being canvassed was for a larger panel of judges, possibly seven, to sit, as sometimes happens in important cases. This would give the result greater credibility and make it seem less of a lottery.

One problem is that, apart from Lord Browne-Wilkinson, the most senior law lords are ineligible because they sat with Lord Hoffmann on the original panel.

There are only 12 law lords so the numbers available are limited and the panel is likely to include some retired law lords. Only four junior law lords — Lords Saville, Clyde, Hobhouse and Millett, have had no connection with the case so far.





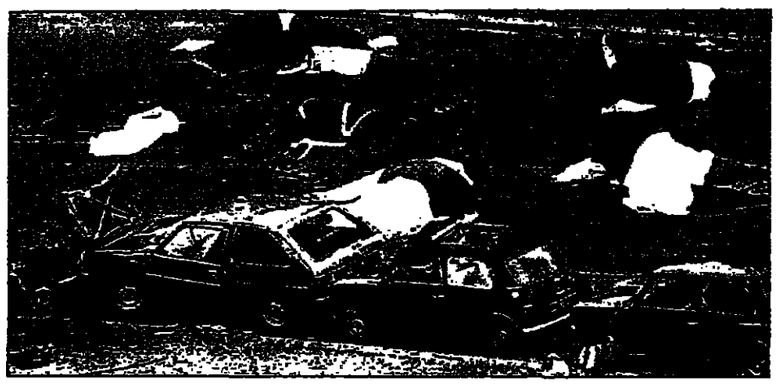
Lord Browne-Wilkinson (left) reading the Pinochet judgment in the House of Lords yesterday, anti-Pinochet demonstrators outside, and (above) Lord Hoffmann delivering his verdict last month





The aftermath (below) after the Hyde Park bomb in July 1982 and (left) Danny McNamee outside the Court of Appeal where his conviction was quashed yesterday PHOTOGRAPH Peter SEAN SMITH

Appeal court clears bomb case man



Rory Carroll

A MAN jailed for the IRA's 1982 Hyde Park bombing yesterday denounced the Court of Appeal after it quashed his conviction but said that did not mean he was innocent.

Danny McNamee, aged 38, said he felt vindicated but accused the three judges of protecting the prosecutors who withheld evidence at his 1987 trial.

He was released last month under the Good Friday Agreement after serving 11 years of a 25 year sentence for conspiracy to cause explosions, including the attack which killed four members of the Household Cavalry and seven horses.

In allowing the appeal Lord Justice Swinton Thomas, Mr Justice Garland and Mr Justice Longmore, sitting in London, said new scientific and fingerprint evidence made the conviction unsafe.

They infuriated Mr McNamee's supporters however by adding: "We accept that the Crown makes out a very strong case that the appellant was indeed a conspirator to cause explosions, and it may very well be that, as a matter of probability, a jury would still have found him guilty if they had the material that we had."

But the possibility that the jury would have acquitted could not be ruled out and so the appeal must be allowed, said the judges. The Crown said it would not seek a retrial.

The judgment found that there had been a failure to disclose relevant evidence at the trial and this amounted to a "material irregularity".

On the steps of the Royal Courts of Justice, Mr McNamee, from Crossmaglen, Co Armagh, said he had been vindicated. "It's proved I was not guilty, even in a really grudging way."

"It is acknowledgement that I spent twelve-and-a-half years in prison for something I did not do. The prosecution had presented a completely false case against me knowing it was false."

The judges had to be dragged kicking and screaming into quashing the conviction, he said.

The Crown built its picture of a master bomber from fingerprints on a Duracell battery and two pieces of tape uncovered in IRA arms caches and a bomb.

Mr McNamee said the prints came from handling during his work at Kimbles Manufacturing in Dundalk, in the Irish Republic.

During the 13-day appeal fresh expert evidence disputed that the battery print was McNamee's.

His counsel, Michael Mansfield QC, said the convicted bomber Desmond Ellis was the source of many of the prints, significant evidence withheld from the defence at the trial and the unsuccessful 1991 appeal.

Terrorists used a remote control device to detonate the 251b car bomb, packed with four and six inch nails, hidden in the boot of a Morris Marina.

The security force's need for a result was still acute four years later when soldiers broke down the door of Mr McNamee's flat in Crossmaglen and handed him to detectives from London.

Speaking earlier this week, the physics graduate recalled that he assumed it was an attempt to disrupt his wedding, due six days later.

His denials of IRA membership were disbelieved despite the fact two members of his family had been executed by the IRA for informing.

At his original trial Mr McNamee was unable to hear the sentence handed down to him by the judge. "I had to ask the screw what I got. He was embarrassed to say 25 years. It didn't seem real," he told the Guardian.

The only one of eight children to go to university, he learned to paint and rediscovered books. The American novelist E Annie Proulx was a favourite.

The appeal has paved the way for a new career. Last year he obtained a 2.1 law degree from London university.

"I want to practise human rights law. This isn't the last miscarriage of justice," he said.

Senior law lord told to make sure embarrassment is not repeated

LORD Irvine's letter to Lord Browne-Wilkinson points up the acute embarrassment Lord Hoffmann's failure to disclose has caused the judiciary — not to mention the legal costs to the taxpayer, *writes Clare Dyer*.

As head of the judiciary, Lord Irvine has gone out of his way to ensure no suggestion of bias taints the re-hearing of the Pinochet appeal before a new panel. Directions along the same lines are likely to be issued to judges in the lower courts for future reference.

The letter, released yesterday, said:

"We must make every effort to ensure that such a state of affairs could not occur again.

"My request to you, therefore, as the senior law lord, is that you, or the law lord in the chair, ensure at the time when any committee is being composed to hear an appeal, that its proposed members consider together whether any of their number might appear to be subject to a conflict of interest; and in order to ensure the impartiality, and the appearance of impartiality, of the committee, require any law lord to disclose any such circumstances to the parties, and not sit if any party objects and the committee so determines."

Orangemen may discipline Trimble for funeral

John Mullin
Ireland Correspondent

THE Orange Order is to consider disciplining David Trimble, Northern Ireland's First Minister, for attending the funerals of three young victims of the Omagh bombing. Denis Rogan, Ulster Unionist Party chairman, is also facing action.

The news comes as the Orange Order gears up for a march and demonstration at Drumcree Church, Portadown, Co Armagh, at the weekend. They have mounted a round-the-clock protest there since July 5, when they were blocked from taking their traditional route down the nationalist Garvaghy Road.

Tensions were rising again in Northern Ireland after a loyalist group calling itself the Orange Volunteers claimed responsibility for bombing a Catholic-owned bar in Crumlin, Co Antrim, late on Wednesday. It was the first such attack since the Real IRA's atrocity at Omagh, which killed 29 people four months ago.

Mr Trimble, leader of the UUP, which has institutional links with the Orange Order, was dismissive of the planned action against him. He and Mr Rogan attended the funeral mass at St Mary's Church in Buncrana, across the border in Co Donegal, for Oran Doherty, aged eight, and James Barker and Sean McLoughlin, both 12.

They were applauded as they entered. Mary McAleese, the Irish president, and Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, also attended.

Mr Trimble said: "What I and others were doing was to display precisely those charitable Christian values which are the duty of every Orangemen." He is a member of a lodge in Bangor, Co Down.

Hardline Orangemen in Mr Rogan's Belfast lodge see him as "easy meat", and believe that Mr Trimble's lodge would take action against the UUP's leader after a move against its chairman.

A condition of Orange Order membership is that "you should not countenance by your presence or otherwise any act of ceremony of Popish worship". It is often ignored in border and rural areas, where Orangemen attend the funerals of Catholic neighbours.

Mr Trimble's wholehearted support for the Portadown Orangemen at Drumcree in 1995 was a factor in his winning the party leadership two months later, and many hardliners believe their constituency MP has let them down.

Police fear the march on Saturday could spark violence after the collapse again of proximity talks involving Orangeman and Garvaghy Road residents. They were brokered by Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff. Up to 10,000 people are expected to march to Drumcree for a carol service.

The security operation has been stepped up again, amid fears that the Orangemen will try to break through security force lines before the end of the year. Traders in Portadown are furious; shops will have to close on what is the busiest day of the year.

The Orange Volunteers emerged last month to make a televised claim that they would attack freed republican prisoners.

It claimed in a statement that an IRA leader drank at McKenna's bar in Crumlin. But Noel McKenna, proprietor, said that of the 12 customers at the time of the attack 11 were Protestant. There were no injuries.

If Epstein did feel a sexual pull towards John Lennon, it could easily have been transmuted into the care with which he managed the group.
The real fifth Beatle

Friday Review front

Birth of the euro

The process of Britain joining the single currency could be quicker than generally assumed. But first Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have to become euro evangelists to shift public opinion, writes **Ewen MacAskill**

Referendum foes await starting gun



Counting the votes . . . both sides assume the poll will be held in autumn 2001. But campaigning will begin much earlier PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN READMON

THE REFERENDUM on the European single currency will be the biggest campaign Britain has seen outside a general election. Both sides are quietly gearing up for a contest that is going to be emotional, passionate and xenophobic as the country takes its most important decision for decades.

Both sides are working on the assumption that the general election will be held in spring 2001 and that the referendum will be held that autumn. But campaigning to win over the British public will have begun much earlier: both sides aim to have their campaign teams actively working by April next year in the run-up to the European Parliament election in June.

The Government has an enormous task ahead in swinging public opinion in behind the single currency.

"It is going to be a huge risk," a member of the pro-euro camp said yesterday. "A government normally will only hold a referendum when it knows it can win. This government may not have that luxury. Events, and the business community, will pressure the Government into going as soon as possible."

The process could be a lot quicker than is generally assumed. A document leaked this week to the Financial Times, written by the Treasury team preparing for the euro, suggests that Britain could be in the single currency within a period of eight months: a referendum held three months after a government decision to join and formal accession five months later. Britain would not then be that far behind other European Union countries, which will begin using the single currency in January 2001.

A survey of polling over the last two years shows that Euro-scepticism remains the predominant public mood. Although the pro-European camp can take comfort from a narrowing of the gap, the Euro-sceptics still enjoy a 20 per cent lead.

"There is still a long way to go and a lot of persuasion to be done. People cannot underestimate the scale of the task ahead," said Danny Alexander, spokesman for the European Movement, a pressure group committed to closer co-operation with the rest of the Continent.

The key question for the pro-euro camp is when Tony Blair and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, will move from quiet promotion of the single currency to the kind of ardent evangelism that will be needed to shift public opinion. At present, Mr Blair seems to be waiting for a momentum to be built up by pro-European business and union leaders. These same leaders are also waiting for Mr Blair to give a lead.

But behind the scenes, the Government is working feverishly towards adoption of a single currency, involving the details of everything from changing cash registers through to the size of the coins and, crucially, how to win the hearts and minds of the British public.

That work was begun by the Tory but pro-European chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, — in secret to avoid rows with the party's Euro-sceptics — and has been taken on at a feverish rate since May 1997 by the Labour government. When Mr Blair finally makes his move — and he showed signs this week of at last standing up to the Euro-sceptic press — all the infrastructure will be in place.

The powerhouse of the pro-single currency campaign will be provided by the long-established European Movement. Documents obtained and leaked by their opponents disclose the kind of people they are recruiting.

In a document marked "campaign structure", they have as leaders Giles Radice, the Labour MP; Mr Clarke from the Tories; and Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat defence and foreign affairs spokesman. Mr Clarke, though approached, is not yet willing to commit himself until closer to the referendum rather than unnecessarily inflame his own party's Euro-sceptics.

Others in the embryonic team include Lord Hollick, the Labour peer and chairman of United News and Media, which owns the Daily Express and who is one of the driving forces behind the campaign; Niall Fitzgerald, chairman of Unilever; Peter Bonfield, chief executive of BT; and, almost certainly, Ken Jackson, general secretary of the engineering union, AEEU, the most pro-European of the main union leaders.

The team has a strong New Labour look about it: the campaign co-ordinator is Colin Byrne, managing director of Shandwick Public Affairs, who was a Labour press officer and who once shared a flat with the Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson; and Philip Gould, the Labour focus group guru, who is also close to Mr Mandelson.

The anti-euro movement is split between at least 10 groups. It is difficult to see Tebbit being able to work with Prior and Owen

The anti-single currency movement is split between at least 10 groups. Such is the diversity of views that it is difficult to envisage them all coming together: would right-wingers such as Lord Tebbit put aside past differences to work with the former Tory wet, Lord Prior, and Lord Owen, the former Social Democratic party leader?

The anti-euro campaign is talking confidently of being able to raise up to £30 million for the referendum, if new rules on funding fail to cap spending at around £5 million. Stephen Woodard, director of the European Movement, said: "We need to match it."

The pro-euro camp, which expects support among the dailies only from The Guardian, the FT, the Express and the Mirror, accepts it is unlikely to sway the Euro-sceptic press. Mr Woodard said: "We have to get round the hostile press by TV, radio, local papers and direct mailshots."

In the referendum on entry to the European Community in 1975, the Cabinet was split. This time round there will be collective responsibility in favour of a single currency. Although Labour backbenchers will have freedom to go into separate camps, the bulk will, as loyal Blairites, be pro-euro.

A senior Liberal Democrat, chatting with friends this week, wondered out loud about the possibility of a snap referendum next year if adoption of a single currency next month — though the currency will not be in circulation — proved an instant success and the pound came under pressure.

All the parties are still working on the assumption it will be after the general election.

The Conservatives might try to turn the election into a battle over the single currency but Labour could, if it chooses, ignore it by saying the issue will be decided in the referendum.

By then, the euro might be a proven success and public opinion readily converted. No one in the pro-euro campaign team is making the assumption it is going to be that easy.

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Britain 'leading' Europe in young adult drug abuse

Stephen Bates in Brussels

LEVELS of recorded drug abuse in Britain are up to five times higher among teenagers and young adults than in other European countries, a survey to be published today reveals.

The report by the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, based on official statistics gathered by EU member states, shows that the proportion of British teenagers and adults in their twenties taking a range of drugs, including cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine and ecstasy, are at much higher levels than in states such as France and Germany.

The figures indicate that whereas 36 per cent of Britons in the age range took cannabis, comparable figures for France were 25.7 per cent, Germany 21 per cent and Spain 22 per cent.

Only Denmark, from a much smaller survey, records similar figures to Britain's.

For cocaine, only Spain beat the British figure of 4 per cent, with Germany 3.7 per cent and Sweden, France and Belgium registering less than 2 per cent.

Nine per cent of young Britons were reported to have experimented with ecstasy, compared with just 2.8 per cent in Germany, 3.1 per cent in France and 1 per cent in Sweden and Belgium.

The report, which will be published at a conference in Vienna today, says that even allowing for differences in the size, date and age range of the national surveys, the returns of the UK are significantly higher than those of other countries.

It adds: "Recent cannabis use [last 12 months] is reported by 1 to 9 per cent of the adult population, depending on the country; Finland, Sweden and eastern Germany present the lowest rates, and Spain and the UK the highest.

"Recent use is higher among young adults, in most countries between 3 and 10 per cent although reaching 20 per cent in the UK."

The report also records disturbing rises in the use of illegal drugs in eastern European countries, with disproportionately fewer resources for the authorities to deal with.

"Despite the efforts made in recent years, drug demand reduction is still a low priority in most countries or is no priority at all."

Researchers found that seizures of cannabis in EU states had levelled out since 1994, after quadrupling in the previous decade, while there are also signs that the use of ecstasy may have levelled off.

The use of heroin and cocaine is still on the increase across western Europe.

They estimate though that the use of amphetamines — tried by up to 16 per cent of young Britons, four times the proportion in Germany and more than 10 times that of France — is increasing.

It adds: "Indicators of supply and availability reinforce the impression that amphetamines and cocaine, rather than ecstasy, may be the growth area in the stimulant type drug market. Fatalities are relatively rare."

The report was described as worrying yesterday by the drugs think tank the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse.

Its head of policy, Annette Dale-Perera said: "Part of the drugs community would like to think that higher levels of drug abuse in Britain are because of our recording of statistics, but that is not the only answer.

"It seems to be partly cultural and partly a question of supply here.

"It is the same with alcohol — on the Continent people drink to drink, here we drink to get drunk.

"We do know that in the last decade there has been an eightfold increase in drug use among 15-year-olds and a fivefold increase among 12-year-olds."

In May the Government issued a white paper, Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain, aimed at reducing abuse among young people.

European Parliament takes new lead by asserting constitutional right to block commission budget

Furious MEPs put their foot down

Martin Walker and Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE European Parliament embarked on a historic clash of powers yesterday by refusing to approve the European Commission's budget, despite intense pressure from centre-left national governments, led by Tony Blair, to fend off what the commission had warned would be "tantamount to a vote of no confidence".

Outraged by a wave of fraud and mismanagement scandals in the commission and new evidence of persistent attempts by the commission to cover them up and mislead parliament, 270 MEPs voted to refuse to discharge the 1996 budget. Only 225 sided with the commission.

Three separate European crises merged into one yesterday, which has profound implications for the future role of parliament and democracy in Europe.

First, parliament finally asserted its role as the body constitutionally nominated to approve or condemn the spending of EU taxpayers' money in a way that could permanently weaken the traditional dominance of the commission bureaucracy.

Second, the commission's failure to clean up its own act and prevent internal frauds has finally been exposed, 10 years after the first fraud inquiry began.

The final straw for many MEPs was evidence from whistle-blowers in the commission about the way some commissioners were connected to frauds and to the use of improper pressure to find lucrative commission jobs for their families and aides.

> Governments feared a defeat would hamstring decision-making

Third, MEPs revolted against the way national governments, particularly the British Labour Party and the Spanish conservatives, put strong pressure on their own MEPs to let the commission off the hook.

The politics of this were confusing, since the British, French and German governments were trying to protect leftwing commissioners, while the Spaniards were trying to prevent a constitutional crisis and ensure that Europe's business continued as usual.

But with major decisions on the budget and farm reform pending, all the national governments feared that a defeat for the commission could hamstring decision-making for months to come. The commission itself made the same point, in a last-minute appeal to parliament which seems to have backfired when MEPs saw it as a kind of blackmail.

"The chances of reforms succeeding in 1999 depend very largely on the credibility and authority of the commission. [It] would be very seriously undermined if the parliament does not vote the budget discharge," the commission statement said.

There were tense and heated scenes on the floor of parliament. Pauline Green, leader of the Socialist group, was jeered when she tried to table a motion to censure the commission while explaining that she would then vote against her own motion and defend the commission.

The long-standing tension between the dominant British and German socialist groups came to a head after Germany's leading fraud-fighter, Rosemarie Wemhauer, resigned from the budget control committee in disgust at the way the the British Labour group tried to bulldoze the Socialist group into backing the commission.

"Wo ist Wemhauer?" (where is Wemhauer?) the Tory MEP leader Edward McMillan-Scott roared across the chamber at Ms Green, as the utter disarray of the divided socialists was exploited by the Tories, Christian Democrats, Greens, Liberals and other political groups to inflict a humiliating defeat on the commission and its Labour allies.

> Parliament has become polarised along traditional political lines

"The conservative group is indulging in gesture politics, just like the Republicans in the US Congress," said the Labour MEP leader Alan Donnelly. "They are sulking after their parties were beaten in the British, French and German elections."

The parliament has indeed become polarised along traditional political lines, and the education commissioner (and former French socialist prime minister) Edith Cresson has claimed that the fraud inquiries are all a rightwing, or even neo-Nazi, plot to discredit her. But the key to yesterday's vote was the principled refusal of German, Austrian and Scandinavian social democrats to tolerate the commission's performance.

Under the usual European convention that no decision is ever quite final, the matter now goes back to the parliament's budget committee before a new vote early next year. The commission gets one last chance to convince MEPs that it can and will do better.

In practical terms there are no immediate implications for the current working of the commission, but unless it survives the inevitable vote of confidence next year it will be almost impossible for any currently serving commisioner to be re-appointed by parliament in future.

Dutch get to grips with drug revolution in designer shops

Jon Henley in Amsterdam

KOKOPELLI is on the Warmoesstraat in the middle of the red light district, two minutes from the railway station and less than 50 yards from the police station. It is bright and airy with stripped pine floors. Tall rear windows overlook a stately 17th-century canal. Anywhere else it might be a designer clothes shop; this being Amsterdam, it is a designer drugs shop.

A year or so ago there were half a dozen of these "smart shops" but now there are more than 150. They pose a problem for the Dutch government, which has Europe's most tolerant and pragmatic drugs policy.

How exactly do you legislate against magic mushrooms and psycho-active cacti — not to mention those little white tablets that are almost, but not quite, ecstasy?

"Everything we sell here is completely legal," insisted Jeroen Burger, a spokesman for Conscious Dreams, the small but fast-growing company that launched the smart shop craze and recently opened Kokopelli. "Okay, the active ingredient in magic mushrooms is on the list of banned drugs. But we don't sell the active ingredient. We sell the natural product."

Natural it may be, but the effect can be as powerful as many outlawed hard drugs. Take, for example, *Psilocybe tampanensis*, the Magic Truffle, disarmingly described as triggering a "remarkably clear trip, but not too disorienting". Or *Panaeolus cyanascens*, which is "metabolised very quickly, making the trip come on fast and strong". Both cost about £30 for five. In Mr Burger's words, they amount to "legal hard drugs".

Moving up the scale of natural hallucinogens, Kokopelli also offers — alongside its Tibetan teas, ginseng, betel nuts and herbal supplements — an innocent-looking plant called *Salvia divinorum*. It carries a kick like a mule: anyone choosing to smoke its leaves is advised to do so with friends, so they can catch the pipe.

"The effect is almost instantaneous," a hand-out frankly admits. "A tingling sensation overtakes your whole body, and you start sweating heavily. Thereafter you lose contact with your body and enter a trance-like state. Visions begin. It is a powerful psychedelic trip and it happens within seconds. It is therefore advisable to inhale while lying down."

The Netherlands already has its 1,200 famous coffeeshops, where the sale of small quantities of marijuana for personal use is tolerate, in the belief that it is better to keep such things out in the open, where they can be supervised, than drive them underground.

In a recent long report, the Dutch health ministry tried to get to grips with the smart-shop phenomenon. It wanted to know whether they were a potentially lethal new development, or merely a kind of alternative chemist, offering "safe" alternatives to banned drugs.

Its conclusion, firmly in the Dutch tradition of respect for individual liberty, was that they were "not an unacceptable danger to society". For the time being they will be tolerated, and closely watched.



The Netherlands' reputation for being progressive about drugs is being put to the test with the emergence of 'smart shops' (above), which have flourished by selling the natural, but still powerful, ingredients of many banned drugs, including ecstasy (below) PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL O'DRISCOLL

They need watching closely. Because, despite the array of natural products on their shelves, smart shops are also engaged in a continual cat-and-mouse game with the authorities over synthetic drugs.

A couple of years ago GHB was banned outright when six Rotterdam teenagers fell into a near-coma after combining it with alcohol. Within weeks, a laboratory had produced an alternative.

Beneath Kokopelli's glass-topped counter lie some white pills — 2C.T.2 — described in its accompanying literature as a "psychedelic amphetamine". It is sold in sets of two 8mg tablets, but beginners are strongly advised to take just one, with a large amount of water.

"Do not take 2C.T.2 alone unless you are an experienced user," the handout warns. "Do not take it if you are pregnant, diabetic, have high or low blood pressure, a heart disease, have ever had hepatitis A or B, or have drunk alcohol."

To Mr Burger this is responsible Dutch drug dealing at its best. "You see, the danger hardly ever lies in the product itself, but in the person using it," he said.

"We test every product personally, and give detailed information to each buyer. People will buy it anyway, and it's far better they do it from us than from some street-corner dealer."

That is also, in essence, the policy of the health ministry. But do be careful to follow the instructions.

Whiffy Metro cleans up its act with subway 'eau de toilette'

Jon Henley

THAT most familiar of Parisian aromas, the heady mixture of singed rubber, day-old sweat, decaying bacteria and urine that assaults the nostrils of the city's underground users, could soon be no more: the public transport authority has decided to deodorise the malodorous Metro.

"We're going to perfume the whole system with a specially-developed new product called Madeleine," a spokesman for the RATP said yesterday. "This is a radical step that will make a major contribution to passenger comfort."

He said scientists were convinced they had found the solution to the pungency of the Metro's 360 stations.

At the heart of the scheme, according to its developer, Pierre Pichat, is titanium dioxide, a chemical powder used in suntan creams, and sunlamps. The compound freshens the air around it when exposed to ultraviolet light, he explained.

"It's true that this powder can destroy bad odours, but it also destroys good odours," said Mr Pichat, a Lyon university lecturer.

"Let's just say that it deodorises the air."

It will probably work best in smaller stations, Mr Pichat said.

Madeleine is not the first attempt to sanitise the Metro. A variety of perfumes has been tried, including Francine in 1993 and 1994.

But that blend of lavender, eucalyptus and mint was so overpowering passengers preferred the original smell.

Advertisement

NICHOLAS NEUFCOURT/MAGPHOTO



Night-time London traffic glides languidly through the sturdy latticework of Notting Hill's labyrinthine thoroughfares. How's that for a caption?

Indonesian forest fires have left men and apes competing for scarce resources, and the apes are losing, writes **John Aglionaby** in Jakarta



Scavenging among the ashes, an orang-utan feasts on a banana by a roadside in East Kalimantan, where most of the estimated 21,000 surviving members of the species live. The WWF says the ape's prospects are 'catastrophic' unless Indonesia changes its policies PHOTOGRAPH: RAMA SURYA

Orang-utans in danger of extinction

ORANG-UTANS will disappear from the wild "in the blinking of an eye" if Indonesia does not take action to prevent forest fires and continues with the unsustainable management of its forests, the Worldwide Fund for Nature warned yesterday.

Announcing the results of a 15-month study into the causes and effects of the huge forest fires and widespread haze in south-east Asia in 1997 and 1998, Dr Carey Yeager, WWF's senior conservation biologist in Indonesia, said the outlook for orang-utans was "catastrophic" unless the Indonesian government changed its policies immediately.

"If things continue as they are at the moment, orang-utans will be extinct in about 100 years. In evolutionary terms that is the equivalent of the blinking of an eye," she said.

The hairy red primates, which can weigh more than 15 stone, are found in the wild only in Sumatra and Borneo. All of the former island and 75 per cent of the latter are in Indonesia.

The current total population is not known, but Dr Yeager estimates that there are about 6,000 in Sumatra and no more than 15,000 in Borneo, of which all but a handful are in Kalimantan, the Indonesian section of the island.

"Even before the fires orang-utans were an endangered species and they had lost 80 per cent of their habitat since the mid-1970s," she said.

"During the last year and a half, 40 per cent of the remaining habitat was burned and millions more hectares are to be cleared for plantations."

Orang-utans, which feed on fruit and foliage, are now competing with other animals and humans for the few scarce resources left. Dr Willie Smits, who works at an orang-utan rehabilitation centre in East Kalimantan, said many of the apes were so desperate for food that they were regularly seen scavenging in villages.

"The drought and the forest fires have made orang-utans and locals vie for the same food," he said. "The locals need the food at this critical time and the orang-utans have no more food in the forest."

He was referring to the seven-month drought, caused by the El Niño weather phenomenon, which destroyed millions of acres of crops and made many areas more susceptible to fire.

According to WWF data, an area the size of England and Wales has been burnt in the past two years, and the Indonesian government has sanctioned the clearance of forests covering three times as much land for plantations, particularly for oil palm.

Dr Yeager said biologists usually factored in an ecological disaster such as Indonesia's forest fires once every century when predicting animal population change. "But with the current state of affairs we are going to have one every three to five years, which will be catastrophic for all animals and especially orang-utans."

"It's a matter of political will," said Tim Jessop, WWF's senior policy adviser for Indonesia. "Because of the economic crisis, the environment, which was never at the top of the government's agenda, is now way down the list of priorities."

He said the WWF could understand that, because of 18 months of economic turmoil, Indonesia was turning to cash crops to earn desperately needed foreign currency, but he stressed: "The government should protect remaining forests and concentrate plantation development solely on land already genuinely degraded by fires or other causes.

Indonesia's president, B. J. Habibie, said yesterday in a speech to mark National Conservation and Reforestation Day that he wanted a thorough review of the government's forestry policies, because in the past "self-interest has been put above public interest, and this often harms people."

Forestry analysts remain unconvinced by Mr Habibie's rhetoric. "We've heard it all before," a Jakarta-based European forester said. "The truth is that there are too many vested interests in Indonesia and the government lies about the scale of devastation it is allowing."

According to government figures, 650,000 acres of forest and peat were burnt in 1997 and 1.2 million this year, but satellite data gathered by the German and Japanese governments and WWF show the area burnt was about 12.3 million acres in both years.

Congo war may wipe out rhino

THE world's last 25 Northern White Rhinos are threated with extinction in the Garamba national park in Congo, the WWF said yesterday.

Three rangers patrolling the park were wounded by unidentified attackers last month. "This attack, and the fact that it happened in the heart of rhino territory, leads us to believe that the world may have to prepare itself for the loss of a unique species, the director-general, Claude Martin, said in a statement.

Patrols have been cut back because of the fighting in Congo, making the rhino more vulnerable to poachers.

WWF also fears for mountain gorrillas in the Virunga national park, on the border with Rwanda and Uganda — *AP, Nairobi.*

China turns screw on dissidents

John Gittings in Hong Kong

TWO prominent democracy activists went on trial in central China yesterday in a crackdown which showed how far post-Mao Beijing still has to go on the road to reform.

Wang Youcai has been charged in Hangzhou with "subverting the state" after he tried to set up the China Democracy Party. Some 200 people gathered outside the courthouse in a show of support, although police intercepted others before they reached the city.

Qin Yongmin, an outspoken dissident also involved in the party, faced a similar charge in Wuhan. Police seized a man as he tried to make a speech outside the courthouse.

The trials appear to have been staged to coincide with today's 20th anniversary of the launch of the late Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. The message is that reform is fine so long as it does not encroach on politics.

The point was emphasised by Premier Li Peng in a recent interview condemning any attempt to "negate the leadership of the party". The Communist Party, in the old Maoist phrase, is "a tiger whose buttocks may not be touched".

Both trials were over in two and half hours, despite the serious charges which could lead to long jail sentences. Defence lawyers were warned off the cases, and Amnesty International says it is extremely concerned that the trials have not been free and fair.

Mr Wang's wife, Hu Jiangxia, said that her husband had told the court he had no intention of subverting the government and had spoken for 30 minutes before being cut off by the judge. No foreign observers were allowed into the courtroom.

A brother of Mr Qin was allowed at his trial, but his father was excluded. He had hoped for a deferral because the family had been unable to find a lawyer willing to take the case.

Another leading dissident, Xu Wenli, has been detained but not yet charged. So far this month 30 other dissidents have been interrogated or charged.

In a demonstration of Chinese-style democracy this week, Beijingers voted for hand-picked candidates in district elections to the People's Congress.

Speculation earlier this year of a political thaw amounting to a "Beijing Spring" was encouraged by President Clinton's famous televised debate on democracy with President Jiang Zemin.

The view of cooller observers that this was mainly a public relations exercise now seems justified.

Mr Jiang has completed the diplomatic season with visits to Moscow and Tokyo, and is getting back to political fundamentals.

The Chinese authorities are keen to ensure that the 10th anniversary of the Beijing massacre, on June 4 next year, does not provoke unrest.

The organisers of the China Democracy Party have applied for registration under laws that say all "social groups" must be approved. A new version of the law published in October is even more restrictive, according to Human Rights in China, an organisation based in the United States.

Eight tame political parties, all of which survived the communist victory in 1949, are allowed to function as part of a "united front" with the Communist Party. But to set up an opposition party is by definition subversive.



A protester holds a picture of Wang Youcai, on trial for trying to set up an opposition party PHOTOGRAPH: VINCENT YU

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Philippines freak show put in dock

Claire Wallerstein on the fight to end a macabre festive tradition

CHRISTMAS starts early in Asia's only Christian country, where it is celebrated with cheese and red apples, and model reindeer made from bamboo.

But another tradition — the visit to the freak show — is more macabre.

The touring shows feature physically handicapped or mentally ill adults and children, and were recently condemned by the vice-president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, as "inhumane and degrading".

Children born with too many limbs are exhibited as "human spiders", those with a single deformed leg as "mermaids", amputees are billed as "lame ducks", and people with skin afflictions as "half-human, half-reptile" or "the child whose mother slept with a frog".

Even at the modern Boom na Boom fun fair in central Manila, there is a quiet corner away from the rollercoaster and dodgems where a thalidomide victim performs in a pit as "Penguin Boy". In a cage a young girl — the "Cannibal Princess" — is kept naked and handcuffed as she gnaws on a chicken.

The National Bureau of Investigation has started a crackdown on such shows in Manila, and next year hopes to spread its operation to the rest of the country.

The head of the anti-child abuse, discrimination and exploitation division, Ricardo Diaz, said: "These freak shows have been around for hundreds of years, but legislation protecting children from exploitation was only passed in 1993."

"We plan to conduct raids on outfits exploiting minors just before Christmas when the carnivals reach their peak — that way we can give the promoters a Christmas gift they won't forget."

He said scouts in the provinces found the "stars" of the shows.

Parents of disabled children are paid as much as £150 and may receive a 25 per cent cut of their children's earnings. Children often continue to have contact with their parents, but they are not allowed to leave the show.

Investigators say criminal charges will be filed against promoters and parents if families are found to have sold their children. Mr Diaz said the maximum punishment was six years.

The field director of Save the Children, Ray Coloma, said: "This is not only exploitation of children, it can also be physically hazardous. Some of them are made to perform in acts such as knife-throwing, tumbling or swinging from ropes."

Mr Diaz said the children performed every afternoon and evening during the holiday season, and usually lived in appalling conditions.

When the Christmas season is over the carnivals take to the roads again, performing around the islands at town fiestas and saints' days.

Mr Diaz estimates that there are probably no more than 100 such children working nationwide.

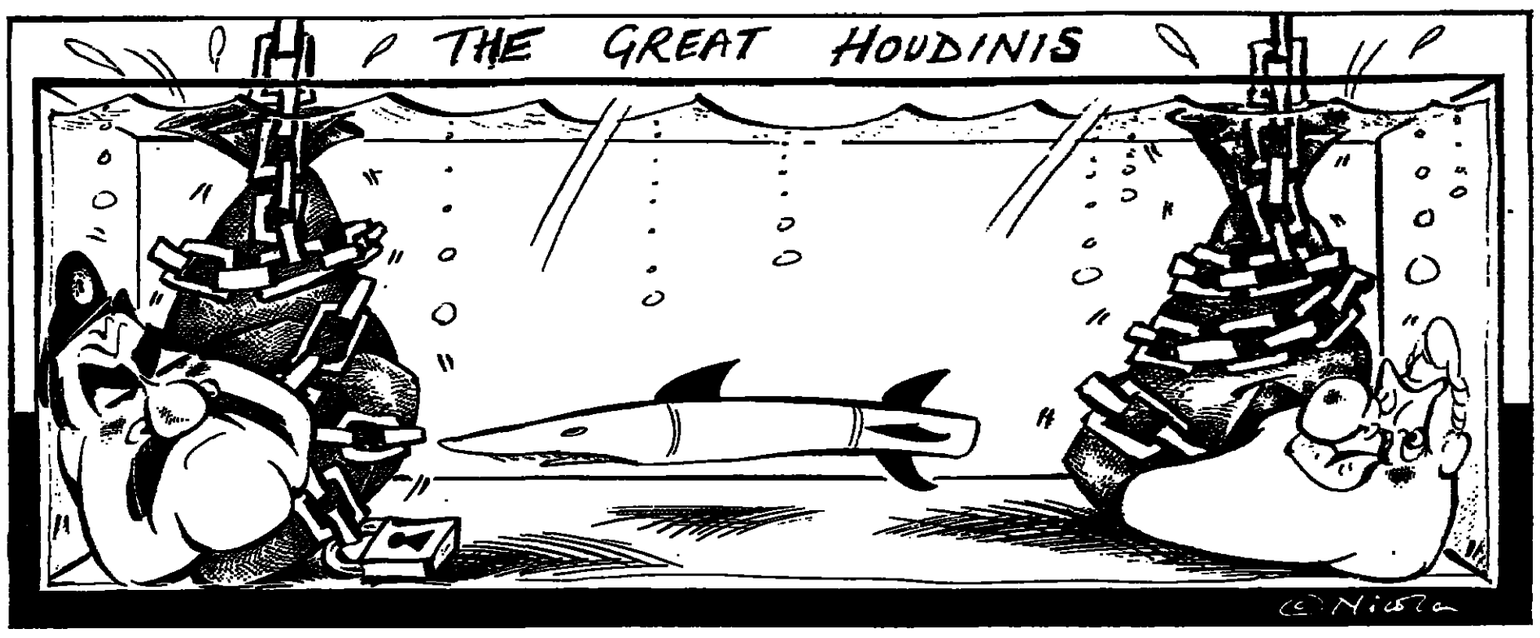
He said rescued youngsters would be cared for by the government, but added: "Many of these children may not want to leave. Working in the carnival they can at least make some money."



Comment

Iraq

Commentators from around the world give Western and Arab perspectives on the air strikes against Saddam



Clinton's blunder

Jim Hoagland

PRESIDENT Clinton has indelibly associated a justified military response to Saddam Hussein's defiance of international law with his own wrongdoing in the White House and the impeachment threat it created. The campaign launched under these circumstances is a policy blunder of major proportions.

Striking Saddam's regime to protect Iraqis, their Arab neigbours and the world from his weapons of mass destruction is a serious mission — far too serious to be obscured under the cloud of suspicion Clinton inevitably kicked up by the timing of his decision, which will delay the scheduled House vote on impeachment.

Clinton refused in November to go through with planned strikes because he was concerned about how the world would react. This time, world reaction to the appearance of a politically endangered president ordering the bombing of Iraqi cities to buy himself some time at home did not count.

The President and British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, listed in their speeches powerful arguments that Iraq presented "a clear and present danger" to the world and had to be bombed for thwarting UN arms inspections. I heard nothing I disagreed with on that score. Many of those same arguments have been aired over the months and years that Clinton has allowed his Iraq policy to drift and Saddam to get away with murder.

But Clinton's insistence that he had no choice but to order the bombing, even as final votes were being counted for the House impeachment balloting, was less persuasive.

By Clinton's own account, it was the submission of a report by Richard Butler, the chief UN arms inspector, that controlled the timing of the strikes. Butler is an important figure in this drama, but hardly a decision-maker — unless Clinton has reason for him to be one. Whatever his intentions, Clinton has now injected the impeachment process against him into foreign policy, and vice versa.

For the rest of the world the looming impeachment seemed until now like a bad, inexplicable car-wreck along a normally peaceful highway. Rubbernecking and tut-tutting briefly at the ghastly details, the leaders and citizens of foreign nations have sped on to their own destinations, leaving Americans to sort out the roadside wreckage and casualties.

But the arrival of judgment time in the House of Representatives and the debate over the timing of the new bombing in Iraq operate together to erase this detachment. The world is now involved in what had been a largely American drama.

In foreign policy at least, the threat of impeachment seems to have focused Clinton on leadership tasks that he has treated with intermittent indifference. Foreign policy analysts will perhaps one day erect a statue to Monica S. Lewinsky in gratitude.

Arriving back in Washington from a historic Middle East trip shortly before the full House was due to vote, Clinton had on his schedule for Friday a semi-annual summit meeting with European Union leaders to discuss trade and other matters.

Clinton's repeated assertions that he is not allowing the serious business of impeachment to affect national security matters gives the House leadership an obligation to return the favour: they should not let national security delay for long the serious business of impeachment. They should hold the vote quickly. The Pentagon would benefit from being able to run this showdown with Clinton's attention elsewhere.

The Judiciary Committee's hearings established for me beyond reasonable doubt that two big things are true: Clinton lied under oath to a federal grand jury, betraying his office, supporters and family. This is no mere private matter. The evidence is equally convincing that the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, and his associates knowingly set a perjury trap around the President's sex life that Clinton foolishly thought he could outwit.

I would find it impossible to vote for impeachment because of the prosecutor's tactics. But that does not mean that others who reach the opposite conclusion are

> One day, foreign policy analysts will erect a statue to Monica Lewinsky

acting unreasonably, irresponsibly or wastefully. It is no accident that this is a close call.

Another Clinton escape does not mean that the impeachment debate has been a waste up to this point, or that sending the matter to the Senate in the face of likely acquittal there is futile. Even in survival, Clinton will emerge from this experience chastised if not chastened and humiliated if not humbled.

He may choose not to recognise that. The constant risk would be that he would fall back into the costly, mocking superiority he evinced in the wake of November's congressional elections. But no "victory" is in this battle for Clinton. If he stays in the White House, he will inhabit Eden after the fall. His days of victory and vanity are over. The nation will watch to see if he can demonstrate that he understands this and seek genuine atonement in the time he has left.

Shortly after the 1992 election one of Clinton's closest confidants told me that their biggest job in Washington would be to restore confidence in leadership and government. Instead, Clinton will inspire distrust, cynicism and revulsion for years to come among many Americans. Living with that knowledge should be punishment enough for any mortal.

Jim Hoagland is a columnist on the Washington Post
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We are isolated. So we had better be deadly serious

Martin Woollacott



THE magnitude of what has happened this week between the United States, Britain and Iraq should not be measured by what seems likely to be the fairly short duration of the aerial campaign.

In a burst of missile flashes in the night we have gone from a situation in which if there was no true peace at least force was kept at one remove, to one in which force can be used at any time. We have gone back to war, and almost certainly not just for the weekend.

Kofi Annan's sad words about the failure of peaceful methods reflect this transition. It could only be halted if Saddam were to back down, as he has before, after extracting political advantage from a confrontation. But this time it is less likely he will do so, and also less likely the US would accept any Iraqi pledges of good behaviour in future.

The reaction of Arab states, particularly the Gulf countries, to the American and British use of force, and as always the movement of domestic public opinion, could change the American attitude. But the prospect now is for a prolonged struggle with the Iraqi regime, with the use of force a constant element.

The Americans are expected to cease their attacks before Ramadan begins, in a couple of days. But they will remain in the Gulf in strength, a permanent punitive expedition that can put its missiles and planes into Iraq within minutes.

President Clinton has already declared they will go in whenever necessary to destroy installations in which the Iraqis could be preparing or storing chemical and biological weapons.

Extensions of their mission, to protect the Kurds or the Shi'ites, or to prevent military movements in Iraq, are probable. Attacks by groups sympathetic to the Iraqis, "deniable" assault by proxy on American and British embassies or offices in the Gulf region, or in Europe or the US, are possible. Finally, the Americans and the British have repeated and deepened their resolve to make new efforts to help Iraqi opposition groups.

The fact is that the ramshackle diplomatic structure within which Iraq and the US have played out their differences over the last seven years and which was maintained by a long-suffering United Nations has collapsed.

The chances of the UN Special Commission's inspectors ever returning to Iraq are small, and if there had ever been any possibility that the US and Britain would shift their position on sanctions, there is no such possibility now. Both sides have ceased to believe the ceasefire settlement of 1991 any longer serves their purposes.

For Saddam, that settlement was there to exploit in such a way that he could emerge at some point with sanctions discarded, weapons intact and political power preserved or enhanced.

FOR the US and at one time most of her allies, the point of the deal was to force Saddam to give up his mass destruction weapons capacity. When he proved ready to pay the price of sanctions for years to keep that capacity, America thought the resulting privation might help bring down his government, but it was soon disillusioned.

The resulting shift from a policy of containment toward one aimed at the removal of the regime is one the Iraqi leader must ponder. It is clear that for symbolic as well as for practical reasons, he sees weapons of mass destruction as essential to his continued rule. In his mind, it seems, to genuinely give them up would be suicide. Yet, as he has misled and stymied the Unscom inspectors, he has pushed the US into a concentration on ways of removing him from power. For Saddam, an abyss yawns on either side.

There is a substantial argument that to work for his removal is likely to be the least costly of the imperfect choices available. As one Iraqi opposition leader has said, although Saddam might fall tomorrow he could also last for years. Lifting sanctions and looking the other way while he keeps his weapons — the only obvious alternative — increases that possibility. The line that it would "open up" Iraq and lead in some way to democratisation is fanciful.

Iraqi exiles are less interested in the form of intervention than in its seriousness. They require convincing that this is not a bit of combat theatre, that it genuinely represents a change of policy.

They require convincing, as may the rest of us, that a president as weakened as Clinton has the will and the weight to carry any policy through. Then they would expect the military aid as well as the encouragement to come together in a government in waiting, learning in exile how to run their difficult country, which they have so far asked for in vain.

On those in America and Britain who decided to open this new phase of what can only be called hostilities with Iraq — politicians, their advisors, and their military staff — rests a heavy responsibility. This operation, and others that may be conducted against Iraq in the future, is taking place outside the UN framework. It has the clear support of only a handful of other countries and is opposed by many.

To be isolated is not necessarily to be wrong. Nor have we yet arrived at a point — whatever we might wish — where military action through the UN is a reliable and sufficient means for settling all those conflicts that seem amenable only to force.

What the Anglo-Saxons are saying to the rest is that we are so certain of our purpose that we feel we can act alone. But we had better be serious, and we had better carry through what we have undertaken — which is to bring an end to the danger Saddam represents, both to his own people and to others, in a way less costly in terms of suffering than the alternatives.

The plan for liberation

Nabil Musawi



IT IS now evident that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction will not be destroyed unless he and his regime are removed from power. On this essential point there is a convergence of interests between the Iraqi people and those of the international community.

The people of Iraq are eager to regain their country from the totalitarian dictatorship of Saddam, and the international community is determined to eliminate Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.

This convergence has been obvious for several years, yet it is only recently that policymakers in the United States and the United Kingdom have come to recognise this fact and begun acting upon it.

The US Congress took the first step when it moved decisively in October of this year to pass the Iraq Liberation Act — which has since endorsed by President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair.

The Liberation Act authorises the President to provide up to $97 million in military assistance and training to the Iraqi National Congress, for the purpose of overthrowing Saddam's hated regime.

This historic Act specifies that the policy of the US requires the removal of Saddam and pledges its support for a new and democratic Iraqi government.

President Clinton signed this Act into law and, in cooperation with Mr Blair, has undertaken to fulfill its purpose. For the sake of the Iraqi people, the President should act quickly.

The Iraqi people are elated by this new approach to Iraq and to the problem of Saddam. They recognise the Iraq Liberation Act as an historic opportunity and are ready to offer their hearts and lives to liberate their country.

Yet they are haunted by the disaster of 1991, when coalition forces allowed Saddam to slaughter a lightly armed population with helicopter gunships, tanks and artillery.

The Iraqi people need more than American and British legislative and rhetorical support — they really need concrete action.

SPECIFICALLY, the Iraqi National Congress has developed a detailed military plan endorsed by American and British military officers based on military exclusion zones, no-fly zones and the support of the Iraqi National Congress's unified Iraq Liberation Army.

Protected from Saddam's heavy armament and aerial attacks, the INC would establish an alternative Iraqi administration in the liberated areas, leading to the formation of a new and representative provisional government.

Under such a plan, the Iraqi people would be allowed to free themselves, establish new administrative, technical and humanitarian institutions and rejoin the international community.

The international community would also benefit. The Iraqi National Congress is committed to a new Iraq, free of the weapons of mass destruction. The Iraqi people have been the first victims of Saddam's nuclear, chemical and biological horrors.

Unscom, the IAEA and other international monitoring organisations would be free to help the INC destroy Saddam's weapons and guarantee that the new Iraq would maintain only a conventional and defensive military.

Bombing alone will never accomplish this essential goal. Saddam and his gang of thugs are the problem; they cannot be part of the solution.

Whatever the provocation leading to the current attack, such military action must be supported by a political plan. Iraq is a country of essential strategic importance — for it has the largest oil reserves in the world, a critical geographic position and a talented and industrious population.

Such resources must be harnessed for the good of the Iraqi people, the region and the world.

The Iraq Liberation Act shows the way forward. Declare that Saddam does not represent the Iraqi people; move to indict Saddam and his henchmen for their crimes against humanity and

> We have a detailed plan, endorsed by the British, to set up liberated areas

establish an effective mechanism that will lead to the creation of a new Iraq, at peace with its people and its neighbours. Such actions require international support. No people under such a brutal dictatorship can free themselves without the aid of outside assistance.

The Iraqi National Congress represents the united opposition to Saddam and his regime; America and the United Kingdom represent the international community's democratic conscience. Together, they can remove the scourge of Saddam and help establish an Iraq, a region and a world safer and less evil than today. The time is now; the Iraqi National Congress is ready. May every bomb that falls fall for the freedom of the Iraqi people.

Nabil Musawi is a member of an Iraqi opposition group, the Iraq National Congress, based in London

The French are furious

Pierre Haski

OFFICIALLY, France "deplores" the latest air strikes against Iraq; in private, it is furious at the Anglo-American operation. Nevertheless, both President Jacques Chirac and the foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, said publicly yesterday that "prime responsibility" for the crisis lay with Saddam Hussein.

But without wishing to say so too loudly for fear of jeopardising its relations with the United States and its chance of playing a role once the military phase is over, Paris really believes the operation was set up by Washington. It also blames Richard Butler, the head of Unscom, for his repeated provocations and the latest about-turn that opened the way for aerial bombardment. This, Paris believes, has been a veritable coup, mounted with no legitimacy whatsoever.

Twice so far this year, France has taken steps to avert looming confontations between Washington and Baghdad. The most recent occasion was at the last moment, in October, when Saddam finally agreed to back down. Then, after a dramatic three-way telephone conversation between Chirac, Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, Paris realised that when the next crisis arrived it would be impossible for the diplomats to act before a military strike.

In a sign of France's marginalisation in the latest crisis, the Americans did not even bother to inform the country's leaders, leaving the job to Blair, who called Chirac barely half an hour before the operation started.

France's incomprehension in the face of the decision to resort to force does not necessarily spring from any feeling of indulgence towards Saddam: on the contrary, official declarations have stressed his responsibility for the crisis. Rather, Paris's analysis is that these bombardments will serve, at best, no purpose and, at worst, will complicate a situation quite complicated enough already.

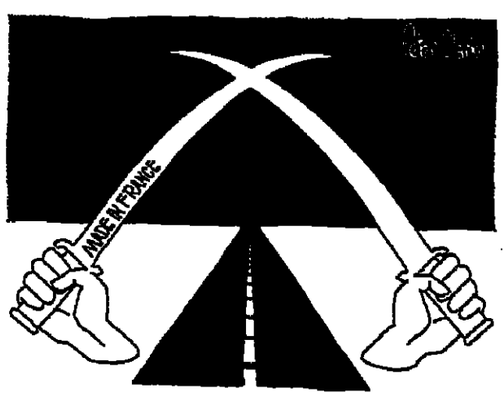
And in the process, thousands of civilians will be killed without Saddam's regime being threatened in any way. Chirac appeared on the steps of the Elysée Palace yesterday afternoon to sympathise with the "suffering" of the people of Iraq — a human dimension that had been strangely "forgotten" in the terse official communiqué of Wednesday evening.

The principal French objection to this operation concerns the by-now ritual question: What can be done after the bombardments? And it is on this point that the lack of an answer from London and Washington worries France's leaders.

Yesterday, Chirac was busy on the phone — to Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, to the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, and to the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin — to consider a way out of the crisis. This list of leaders strongly resembles the list of those who are "excluded" from the crisis.

The difficulty lies in finding a means of getting out of the crisis that circumvents what has already been forbidden by the US — in particular, Washington's de facto refusal to lift the embargo strangling Iraq since 1991 until Saddam is removed.

The risk is that the Iraqi leader will also derive something from the confrontation: he may be liberated from the contraints of Unscom, leaving him free to build up his arms again with the help of clandestine oil export revenues. Such an outcome, which is far from unlikely, would be the opposite of what the Americans intended.



So how credible is France's position? Paris is under permanent suspicion from Washington and London of always being motivated by trade considerations, and the rest of Europe has aligned itself docilely with the US. "We have no margin for manoeuvre in a conflict of this kind directed by the United States," the German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, said yesterday.

But this time Paris has opted for the opposite of the position it took during the 1991 Gulf war, when François Mitterand took the Americans' side so he could play a part in the political phase that followed. Today, to play a role "afterwards", the French leaders are abstaining "during". They have therefore become the incarnation of a form of mild resistance to America's all but total hegemony.

The international balance of power being what it is, however, Paris is also obliged to abstain from saying out loud what it really thinks of US policy in this sorry affair.

Pierre Haski is foreign editor of Libération

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'So Pinochet gets a chance to escape, while Saddam dodges the smart bombs'
Ian Willmore, Letters

Action in the Gulf

Means clear: ends unclear

WE KNOW what Operation Desert Fox is not. It's not to remove Saddam from power nor kill him. It's not about punishing the people of Iraq. All that, as they say, is official. It comes from prime minister, foreign secretary and chief of staff. From White House and Pentagon, backed up by Tony Blair — whose solicitude for the president of the United States is reaching patronising proportions — come robust denials of any connection between the attack and Bill Clinton's fate in the House of Representatives. You would, it's true, have to be a conspiracy theorist of the highest imagination to believe there was anything prearranged about the American attack; likewise, it beggars belief that American Gulf calculations during the past nine months have had no reference to domestic politics. So, why now and why this kind of action?

For some people military aggression will always be an obscenity, made worse by the theatrical presentation of missiles and sirens on real-time television. For others, the only legitimate response to the engagement of British service personnel is metaphorically to snap a salute and ask questions, if at all, a lot later. For us, what matters most is justifying the bombs and the missiles and the inevitable casualties by the higher good of preventing some future outbreak by Saddam. On that score, the Blair Government's articulation of reasons for a show of force can so far only be called indistinct.

These events pose other, sharp questions about Britain's defence posture, the reasons why we at this hour, in this state of European engagement and national prosperity, should still strive to be at the military top table, questions made even more pressing by the recent Anglo-French military concordat. They can wait. What won't is the enunciation by ministers of the step by step model of containment they evidently have in mind. Tony Blair calls Saddam a serial liar; there's a danger of serial missile lobbing. Many find talk of "degrading" Saddam's chemical and biological weapons programmes offensive not because they are unprepared to support bombing but because the euphemism insults intelligence. When Robin Cook talks of good progress we need to be let in on the scheme that is evidently somewhere in his mind. Is a "heavy setback" for Saddam enough of a justification for death and destruction?

Tony Blair yesterday gave the House of Commons a succinct history of Saddam Hussein's non-compliance since 1991 with the conditions on which the Gulf war ended. The plan now seems to be continued sanctions plus the threat of further attacks if and when Saddam's military capacity broaches some (unspecified) threshold of offensiveness plus (unspecified) attempts to reignite civil and political opposition to Saddam. Mr Blair has twice within 24 hours mentioned his heavy responsibility in approving military action. But responsibility doesn't end there. It's also about explanation, telling a convincing story about the Government's medium-run thinking. That the politics of the Middle East are complex; that superpowers find it easier to flex military muscle than sustaining effective opposition to an authoritarian regime; that realism in international relations may entail ignoring the United Nations Security Council while citing the report of United Nations weapons' inspectors: the public might be able to understand all that and accept that targetting cannot always be precise, whatever the proponents of long-distance missiles may say. But without a sharper sense of the ends, the means can look disproportionate. Suspicion may grow that those craters, those explosions — and the pictures of them — have as much do with petulance or playing to Peoria as strategic intent.

Judicial turkey

The law is becoming a lottery

EVEN the Chileans are calling the latest events in Britain's highest court a "soap opera". After all the emotion for and against Chile's former dictator, the effort to bring to justice a man who is charged with torture and conspiracy to commit mass murder has come to depend on a kind of judicial yo-yo. Which panel of judges has the last word, and when is that last word really, really the last one?

Lord Hoffmann made a small mistake in not declaring his links to Amnesty, but in deciding that this was enough to nullify the original judgment the law lords yesterday made things worse. They have created a precedent for appealing against appeals not to a higher court because there is none, but to a different panel of the same court. The impression that the law is a lottery gets a powerful new boost. If before last month's hearing Lord Hoffmann had declared his links to a charity which promotes some of Amnesty's causes, it is by no means certain that General Pinochet's lawyers would have asked him to stand down. There was no presumption for expecting Lord Hoffmann to decide the issues in only one way. But, once Lord Hoffmann came up with an unfavourable judgment, it made sense for General Pinochet's large and well-financed team of lawyers to inflate a minor issue, even though his solicitors admitted this week that they knew of the Amnesty links before the hearing. They, too, remained silent. Yesterday's panel of law lords would have done better to ignore the general's solicitors' clever use of delay and reject the motion.

Judges who reveal an interest are usually allowed to continue a case on the grounds that they are deciding points of law rather than the truth of disputed facts. The panel of which Lord Hoffmann was a member was not judging General Pinochet's guilt. It was deciding issues of jurisprudence. Does international law treat torture and hostage-taking as international crimes which deserve punishment in any part of the world, wherever they were committed? Does a former ruler have immunity, either as a former head of state or because all his alleged actions, including ordering murders, were part of his official duties? One can only hope that the next panel of law lords will take the view, ideally unanimously, that General Pinochet does not have the immunity he claims. Whether they do or not, yesterday's victory of tactics over principle has interrupted the search for justice unnecessarily.

No intelligence

Tinker, tailor, editor, spy?

A SACKED spy claims a national newspaper editor was paid by MI6 to do unspecified work of a secret nature. The editor denies he has ever been an agent, paid or unpaid, for MI6. His managing editor cracks a joke: terrible slur on a journalist to suggest he might be able to keep a secret, ho ho. End of story? Not quite, surely.

There is, let it be said, no evidence that Dominic Lawson, editor of the Sunday Telegraph, is an agent of MI6 or that he has ever received a farthing from the security services. The allegations come from a source, Richard Tomlinson, who is a disaffected former intelligence operative and whose claims are difficult to test. But matters that have been so pointedly raised in the House of Commons are difficult to ignore: it is only right that the matter should be cleared up.

We must accept Mr Lawson's assurance that he has never been an "agent" of MI6. It would clear the air considerably if he could also state unequivocably that he has never been an "asset". As we disclosed yesterday, while editor of the Spectator Mr Lawson published two pseudonymous articles on the Bosnian conflict from a serving MI6 officer. Readers of the magazine were told the name of the author had been changed: they were not told that the articles were the work of a member of the Secret Intelligence Service. Mr Lawson says he did not know that the author was a member of MI6. Was he then duped? If so, is it the practice of MI6 to plant articles in newspapers and magazines without coming clean with editors? That would be a most disturbing state of affairs, and one which the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee might like to investigate.

And what of the Spectator? The magazine has perfectly reasonably campaigned for openness and high ethical standards in others — this newspaper included. Perhaps it will now ask an independent assessor to look into these strange links with MI6. So far, as the magazine's media columnist writes this very week, "there has been a virtual silence".

Letters to the Editor

Counter-attack from the readers

ROBIN Cook says that in the context of renewed war against Iraq "we are not contemplating any action that we have any reason to believe to be illegal".

Will he release the legal advice he has received? Then we can be certain that the Government not only believes that war without express Security Council authority is lawful but, according to the advice that it has received, there isn't "any reason" to believe the contrary.
Richard Wilkins.
London.

WHAT will the bombing achieve? Is it guaranteed to significantly "degrade and diminish" Saddam's capabilities to build up armaments and threaten his neighbours as claimed by Tony Blair. If not, how would the UN propose to deal with an alleged continued threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in a further devastated but still dangerous post-war Iraq? Will Richard Butler be at ease returning to Iraq to take up where he left off?
Joha Anders.
Swansea.

AS an Arab who has lived in this country for many years, I am appalled by the British and American insouciance at the bombing of Iraq. The specious arguments being put forward to justify it barely disguise an underlying and profound contempt for Arabs.

Three weeks ago, the Pentagon estimated 10,000 Iraqi deaths as a likely consequence of the bombing then being contemplated. The fact that this knowledge did nothing to prevent the US and Britain from attacking Iraq now can only indicate a callous indifference to the death of Arabs whose lives are seen as a cheap price to pay for Western political gains.
Dr Ghada Karmi.
London.

EXPLODING Iraq's stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons would disperse large quantities into the atmosphere with, in the case of biologicals, the danger of uncontrollable spreading.

Earlier this year Robin Cook's office wrote to me, explaining that, in the event of air strikes, care would be taken not to attack stockpiles but to target upstream production plants and stores.

However, statements made by the Prime Minister and US spokespeople as the current wave of missile strikes began indicate that stockpiles are being targeted. What steps are planned to prevent the spread of released alleged agents beyond Iraq's borders? Or are neighbouring populations expected to suffer friendly fire much as the inhabitants of the Pakistani village which was hit when a US cruise missile missed its Afghan target a few months ago?
Prof Steven Rose.
Director, Brain and Behaviour Research Group, The Open University.

YOU take Clinton's rhetoric far too seriously (Leader, December 17). Iraq is the touchstone in US politics. If you want to make it politically in the US, you've got to be "tough on Iraq", just like you had to be "tough on the Soviets" in the past. If you're seen as backsliding, you've had it. Far from wishing to unseat Hussein, Clinton needs him in office until some other bogey-man is found.
Paul Flewers.
London.

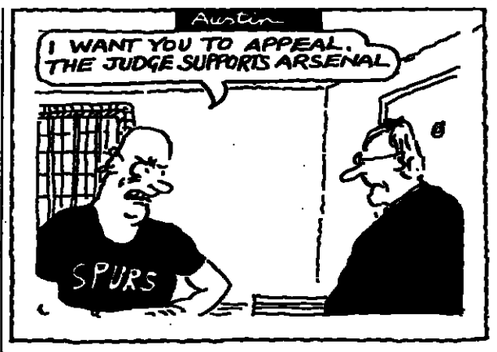
TONY Blair's appeal to the people of Northern Ireland to turn away from violence as a way of achieving their political ends sits uneasily with his actions in Iraq. If he really believes that diplomacy is the solution to even difficult problems then he should practise this himself.
Matthew Rees.
Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey.

WHAT has happened to controversial journalism? Clinton launches an attack on the eve of impeachment hearing, and no observers bat an eye. Monica performs oral sex on Clinton, and 100 cruise missiles are ejaculated onto the Iraqi populace.
Tom Hughes.
London.

PLAIN English is always an early casualty of war. Is "degrade" — short for kill and destroy — to be the first military euphemism of this campaign?
Nann Grewal.
Kidlington, Oxfordshire.

OUR weapons of mass destruction which, regrettably, may kill innocent civilians, are being deployed to save Iraq from its own weapons of mass destruction which, despicably, may kill innocent civilians. Let's hope the distinction isn't lost on those same civilians as they shelter in their bunkers.
John Weldon.
Sheffield.

IS Tony Blair's devoted servitude to Bill Clinton in the bombing of Iraq a case of "Wag the lap-dog"?
Andy Melia.
Formby, Merseyside.



Research may be suppressed, but universities stay free

GEORGE Monbiot (Integrity for sale, December 17) suggests that commercial funding is compromising scientific research in Britain's universities.

Increasingly research contracts contain a clause that prohibits the right to publish the data or make findings public without prior written consent from the sponsor or some third party. It is reasonable to ask for a specified delay to secure a patent or protect a commercial position, but it must be wrong for the results of research undertaken in the university or NHS sector to be subject to the possibility of suppression.

This is of particular concern for clinical research in which patients have volunteered to participate, often assuming that the results of the study will be made available to the wider medical and scientific community. Universities and ethics committees should reject any research proposal that allows the possibility of an embargo on making the results public.
Prof Patrick Vallance.
University College London.

PARTICULAR and familiar concerns attach to funding from tobacco companies, which is why we agreed a joint protocol with the Cancer Research Campaign. But there are no grounds for supposing that commercial funding necessarily undermines academic freedom.

Under the dual-support system, universities are funded by the HE Funding Councils for basic infrastructure and can then approach other funders for particular projects.

Universities are proud of their links with business and industry, which enable them to undertake innovative research and deliver skills our country needs.
Diana Warwick.
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Feminists shouldn't celebrate

THAT the education system is increasingly failing working-class young men is hardly a cause for triumphalism (The future is female, December 18). Neither is the fact that women are more employable because they are more willing to take low-paid jobs.

That 1990s clones of The Ronettes and The Supremes are top of the charts is irrelevant. They were exploited by a male-dominated industry too. As contemporary feminism enjoys linking itself with the glitz and glamour of the pop world it distances itself from the issues that affect people living in the real world.
Tony Harris.
Swansea.

No end to pier

BRIGHTON'S West Pier will be restored (End of Brighton pier feared, December 14) The Heritage Lottery Fund and our private-sector partners are committed to providing the funding to re-create it as it was in the 1920s.

The delays have not been about the funding of the restoration, but about ensuring the long-term commercial viability of a restored West Pier. None of the parties wishes to restore the pier and then risk that it goes into another economic cycle of decline.

The recent and foreseeable damage to the pier's structure is regrettable, but not disastrous. We can look forward to not the end of the West Pier, but the end of its decline.
Dr Geoff Lockwood.
Brighton West Pier Trust.

In tune

I REFER to your article on Dr Neary (Choir fees row that shook church, December 10).

I would like to point out to you that the only reason Cherie Booth QC was not involved in Dr Neary's case after initially advising him was that urgent problems arose on the matter whilst Miss Booth and her junior in chambers, Jane Oldham, were on holiday.

I would be grateful if you could bring this letter to the attention of your readers so that there is no misunderstanding as to why Miss Booth was no longer involved in Dr Neary's case.
Michael Kaplan.
Senior Clerk to Miss Booth.
London.

What's Pinochet got that Saddam Hussein hasn't?

HUGO Young, in accepting bias on the part of Lord Hoffmann (Comment, December 15), ignores the inherent and persistent bias of the legal establishment throughout the centuries in favour of the rich and powerful.

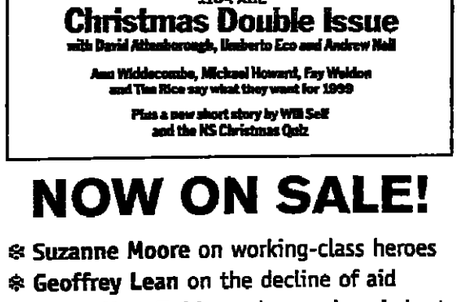
There are a multitude of examples of ingrained judicial bias which Mr Young does not question. Should judges who are shareholders in companies which don't recognise trade unions, or which have come into conflict with their workers, be banned from ruling on questions relating to trade union law? How about barring any judge with a record in the armed services from presiding over a trial involving an Irish defendant, or indeed anything to do with the conflict in Ireland?

And how can any judge or magistrate who is a landowner, still less has hunted, be allowed to preside over a trial involving eco-protestors, hunt saboteurs or indeed anyone else who doesn't subscribe to their way of life.
Tony Greenstein.
Brighton, East Sussex.

SO Pinochet is to be given another chance for escape, while Saddam dodges the smart bombs? It seems that whether you are rated an evil, rightwing, military dictator to be bombed into submission or a friendly, rightwing, military dictator to be given a pat on the back and a comfortable retirement is purely an accident of fate.

Surely some reform is in order?
Ian Willmore.
London.

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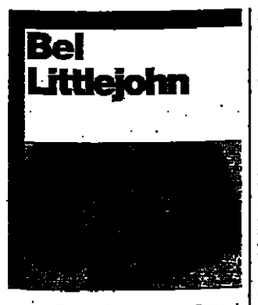
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Talk about weeping



Bel Littlejohn

NO, I'll never forget the day Pinochet seized power, not as long as I live. I was convener of Leeds University students' union at the time, and cooking a lasagne and raw onion bake for our president, the young Jack Straw. Not for us the preprocessed factory-farmed crap sold by the multinationals. Funny to think of it now, but Peter Mandelson was also there, representing Equity's radical student wing. He joined after a successful season as Baron von Trapp in the National Youth Theatre production of The Sound of Music.

Jack had brought round a litre of Ramada red (£1.19, from the Co-Op) and one or two guys were hanging loose on bean-bags rolling joints, pooling thoughts on possible links between Spiro Agnew, the wedding of Princess Anne, the Poulson affair and the death of Bilbo Baggins.

When the news came through, we were trying to get our heads round the nationalisation of all means of production within the Leeds students' union building. I was in tears, Jack was in tears, we were all in tears. Talk about weeping. "Bastards!" I cursed, passing a plate of lasagne bake to Jack before adding, "and there's extra lentils on the blue saucer if you want them". Forged in the fiery furnace of sixties idealism, we vowed then and there to spend the rest of our lives fighting for the ideals for which Salvador Allende lived and died. Then we finished our lasagne bake, drained the Ramada red, maybe had a spliff or two, and caught the last 20 minutes of Monty Python. Amazing.

And you know what? Over the course of the next 25 years we may have grown older (definitely!) and wiser (maybe!) but we never, ever lost the sheer burning idealism of our youth. The flame of Allende still burns deep within our hearts.

When we left Leeds later that same year we went in our different directions, but our values were well and truly forged in stone. In 1975, I set up my own PR company, Bel & Frendz, determined to cut through the crap and inform the public only about those products — non-materialistic, non-toxic, pacifist and anti-imperialist — we truly believed in. Meanwhile, Jack was fighting his guts out as a Labour candidate, determined to build a stronger union movement as a barrier to the onward march of capitalism against the small man. Peter had already founded his radical touring theatre company, 8:74, committed to emphasising the thirst for social equality in the plays of Noel Coward. The company's name was, of course, based on the ideal proportions of peach juice to champagne when mixing a Bellini cocktail.

WHENEVER the three of us met in the late seventies and early eighties, the conversation never strayed far from our abiding hatred for General Augusto Pinochet. "My God, let's hope Pinochet's gonna get what's coming to him," Jack said to me, over a Dover sole at the Savoy Grill in early '85. I nodded in agreement. "Well, Neil's given those militants a beating they'll never forget — and that's for sure!" he added with a chuckle, taking another sip of his middling Sancerre. "By the way, we may have won Murdoch over — and that can only be good news for the working people of this country."

By this time, my PR company had really taken off. Still biding by our original ideals, we had matured sufficiently to move beyond our initial head-in-the-sand, fists-in-the-air posture to take on more challenging accounts: British Nuclear Fuels, Imperial Tobacco, The Mink Marketing Board, it seemed to us far more genuinely radical and innovative to change things from the inside, rather than act like perpetual students protesting just for the sake of it. Meanwhile, Peter had grown disillusioned with theatre as a vehicle for political stability and had moved into mainstream government. But like us, he never lost the ideals Allende had planted in him all those years back.

He dreamed one day of spending £750 million of the people's money constructing a giant dome. "The biggest and emptiest you ever did see!" he enthused.

As we approach 1999, Peter's dome is nearly up — sponsored by prestige names like BSkyB and McDonalds — Bel & Frendz has just gained the prestigious £2 million North Korean Tourism account and Jack has undertaken the most radical clampdown on squeegee merchants in the history of socialism.

And more, much more than this, we all still really, really hate General Pinochet. My God, we hate him. Times may change, but ideals? No way.

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

LISTENERS to the Today Programme yesterday will have enjoyed hearing retired Appeal Court judge Frederick Lawton criticising Lord Hoffman for failing to declare his link to Amnesty before passing the judgment reversed yesterday.

Sir Frederick, who turns 87 on Monday, was most persuasive in arguing the need for all judges to declare any political bias. Had the interview run on for another minute or two, I feel sure — given that he was discussing General Pinochet and a Jewish judge — that Sir Frederick would have mentioned his own political background. He might even have recited this passage, dated November 28 1936, from Action, the newsletter of Oswald Mosley's party, concerning its parliamentary candidate for Hammersmith North. "He founded the Cambridge University Fascist Association in 1932 ... Mr Lawton has already made his mark at the Bar and will provide north Hammersmith with a fine, fighting Fascist candidate." On the phone, a genial Sir Frederick says that he agreed to but never did stand for the Fascists. "I was only 24, and had my living to earn," he explains, laughing fondly at the memory. Happy 87th birthday, Sir Fred, and many more.

IN THE Arts Council's budgets for next year, its grant to the London Review of Books was halved, to £14,000, after an "appraisal of its financial position". The LRB's new lonely hearts column — "Nubile, sylph-like, sex-starved 19-year-old Dutch girl," begins one in the current issue, "trapped inside the body of a 57-year-old part-time lecturer in Greek art" — has stuck a profitable chord with bookish frustrates. This is a business opportunity the Diary should clearly consider — "Ruddy-faced septuagenarian madman with good friend in Downing Street seeks dominant woman with strong hands or good selection of canes."

IN times of great crisis it is always a comfort to be reassured that Independent Television News retains a clear sense of what matters most. "News At Ten beats BBC," screams the headline on an ITN press release, "to go live with coverage of Bagdhad bombing." Such a grown-up world, TV news, and so effortlessly classy.

WE are touched by a heart-warming seasonal tale in the Tribune. School students working for Boots in Croydon, says the paper, were too shy to tell management that they were upset to be told they would be sacked if they refused to or complained about working on Boxing Day at normal rates. Silly children, as Tribune's Mike Naughton was happy to illustrate, a gentle word in the corporate shell can cure a multitude of woes. "It's all been a misunderstanding," a Boots spokeswoman now says. Speak up next time, kids.

FORMER Tory MP Gerry Malone writes of the collapse of the European under his editorship in this week's Spectator. My colleague, Simon Bowers, rings Gerry to say how much we enjoyed the piece and to ask about his future. "I'll be thinking about future plans in the New Year," he says. Well, if you're at a loose end, says Simon, we'd be glad to give you shifts here, with special responsibility for making the tea. "Ha, ha, ha. I'd be glad to make the tea. Thanks very much." I like a man who knows his limitations. Gerry will start on a week's trial on January 4. We'll take it from there.

FINALLY, to that magazine's editor, Frank Johnson. To you, Frank, we send wishes of good luck on your forthcoming nuptials. Although the paper you write for every week, the Daily Telegraph, prefers to describe you as "a bachelor", you married someone else a few years ago. How many other Mrs Johnsons might be out there is unknown. Fingers crossed, then, that when the question about "just cause or impediment" is voiced, a troupe of gently weeping, middle-aged ladies does not storm up the aisles.



Father Xmas is highly edutaining. So what that he doesn't exist?

Decca Aitkenhead



A SUNDAY school teacher in Cardiff has had an uncomfortable week. Distressed parents want him to apologise for committing the scandalous gaffe of telling his class something that was actually true. The children left his church in tears, and their parents have been talking to the press. One father complained: "I know he was trying to teach them the true meaning of Christmas, but there are different ways to do that." The pastor, may he burn in hell, had told the children that Father Christmas didn't really exist.

Telling the truth about Father Christmas has always been considered at best unnecessary, at worst unkind, and little has changed. The hapless pastor's mistake was to assume that it had. But our willingness to tell children lies is changing. It's just that it isn't changing in the direction the pastor imagined.

Far from fading into a curious anachronism, Father Christmas is finding our times more to his suiting than ever. His myth provides some vague moral instruction about the importance of being well-behaved, but he's a really fun guy and, better still, he also helps sell a lot of toys. Who cares that he doesn't exist, when you're looking at an edutainment package as good as that? He is that most modern of child-orientated devices — an edutainment icon.

There is nothing new in Father Christmas, but edutainment — or infotainment — is an American concept steadily establishing itself in this country. The idea is simple — instead of teaching people about things in a boring old way, you give them entertainment which cleverly includes some worthwhile information. It is the educational equivalent of hiding spinach inside Mars Bars.

The theory is superficially attractive, but the fully developed product could be seen in practice last week, at the opening of a new hotel. The resort has themed itself on the legend of the lost city of Atlantis, with fake "ruins" and tour guides on hand to tell you all about Atlantis. The guides boast that they have done a lot of serious research, and suggest the talk they give is historically accurate. A less convincing lie would be hard to imagine.

None the less, the resort is selling itself as a valuable educational experience, and the American tourists flocking there appear to take it at its word. The pretence that their kids are learning something justifies two weeks in the Caribbean, and the hotel makes a lot of money. It is profiting from the same principle which underpins the Discovery Channel on cable TV — an "educational" channel nobody watches but which allows parents to pretend they got cable for their children's intellectual development, when in fact the family sits round watching repeats of Dallas.

IT'S pointless being precious about these things, some will say. To learn almost nothing is an improvement on literally nothing, which is the alternative; tourists wouldn't spend the day in the research library if they couldn't go to Atlantis. This is the defence for Steven Spielberg's "historical" movies, like Amistad, and third-rate docu-dramas. At a pinch, it can be applied to sensationalist news coverage, "gritty" soap operas, even the X-Files. If viewers learn something from the shows, and are made a little bit aware, then that must be a good thing.

On balance, I'd rather know that I knew nothing about something than think I knew something when in fact what I knew wasn't true. In theory, there is no reason why edutainment shouldn't be both informative and entertaining. In practice, this is seldom ever the case. If the motive is to make money, accuracy will always be sacrificed for accessibility, so the facts get lost not just in artistic licence but in commercial licence too. The only consolation is that, with luck, most consumers of edutainment will very soon forget everything they "learned". Like a Big Mac, edutainment is so easy to take that it's forgotten before it's even gone.

If edutainment went no further than hotels and movies and bad cable channels it would be a pity but hardly a problem. Unfortunately, it has the makings of the perfect Third Way package. Politicians are of a mind to imagine that business can legitimately involve itself in education; indeed, the government sometimes gives the impression of thinking that business actually cares about the intellectual well-being of youngsters. Not only does Tony Blair anticipate some happy coincidence of interests between children and business, he sometimes seems to believe business has a touching, disinterested passion for education.

Trading under the guise of education is rather like fighting a war with God on your side — you can get away with murder. Business likes nothing better than the chance to appropriate the warm glow of imparting knowledge: breakfast-cereal packets sell themselves to parents with the spurious offer of "fact cards" about this or that for children, supermarkets sponsor school books, and so on.

We are familiar with the idea of business sponsoring educational enterprises, from the local school magazine to an academic chair at Oxford. But when firms involve themselves in the process of providing the education, the price we pay for being naive about their motives becomes much higher.

Of course education should be accessible and entertaining. Good teaching always is. But, given the opportunity, commercial interests will always favour education so accessible as to be meaningless, more entertaining than true, if it can get more "customers" interested.

Popularising education is not the same thing as commercialising it. At the Atlantis resort last week, a guest actually compared a tour guide to David Attenborough, on the grounds that both were bringing a dry old subject to life for people who would otherwise never have taken an interest. This is the kind of comparison edutainment lives for.

To be in favour of education ought not to mean being in favour of anything that calls itself education. Edutainment has as much to do with teaching as dial-a-horoscope has to do with spirituality — or as the Santa Claus in Toys R Us has to do with Christmas.

This city's finest celebration pays tribute to the second best

Tickered out hero

Bill Buford in New York



RECENTLY John Glenn, the pensioner from outer space, returned to Earth and was given a parade up what New York calls its Valley of Heroes. The Valley of Heroes is the city's famous ticker-tape route: it features in all those fluffy photos from the twenties and thirties and runs from the bottom of Manhattan through a canyon of towering buildings until it reaches a park in front of New York's City Hall.

The parade was organised within an astonishing three days. The Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, said that John Glenn was a hero of the nation, and that therefore he deserved a parade.

But why does a hero of the nation deserve a parade in New York? John Glenn lives in Ohio, a state famous for its root vegetables — potatoes, carrots, and a uniquely creamy turnip which, properly roasted, is an item much cherished by discriminating housewives for their family platters on Thanksgiving day.

John Glenn has never lived in Manhattan, and appears to have avoided the place since he was last given a parade after his last trip to outer space, 36 years ago. And of course Manhattan, for all its enthusiasm for heroes of the nation, is not the capital of the nation.

It is not, in fact, the capital of New York state.

Even so, John Glenn is a hero and New York was determined to honour him.

A number of nearby schools were notified — Hamilton High School in Brooklyn, several from Queens, All City High School in Washington Heights — and asked to produce marching bands.

Early on Monday morning, 12 bands duly arrived at Battery Park, their drummers and horn players and baton-bearing "marchinettes" looking sleepy and cold, undeniably having misplaced that thing which meant that they had swing.

A boys' little league team — last summer's champions — was invited to send its members; a girls' softball team appeared as well. Six floats were procured from an outfit in New Jersey — gaudy, soiled things designed mainly to display women in bathing suits — and three truckloads of computer-generated waste were deposited at the parade's starting-point.

The computer-generated waste — or CGW, as it is known by the parade experts — was then distributed to all the buildings along the Valley of Heroes. The routine is that the building supervisors arrive early, load the stuff into their elevators and drop a large parcel on each floor, so that when the office workers show up they can grab a handful at their leisure and, at the appropriate moment, open a window and hurl the stuff back out into the street below.

TICKER tape, once the very metaphor of this business-driven district of the city, disappeared alas with that imperative from black and white movies — "Gladys, I need you to wire a cable urgently".

No wires, no ticker tape. Now it's CGW, tonnes and tonnes of CGW. Or it's toilet paper. Or in fact it's anything that comes to hand. Manhattan, I have come to conclude, is the only city in the world that celebrates a hero's exceptional achievement by taking a bin of office rubbish and dumping it on his head.

By the Sunday night, wooden police barriers, unmistakable in their NYPD blue, were erected along the pavement to contain the crowds. John Glenn's last appearance attracted more than three million people and produced more ticker-tape waste than any other in history — sanitation workers gather all the litter afterwards with *snow ploughs and weigh it*. On such scales history waits.

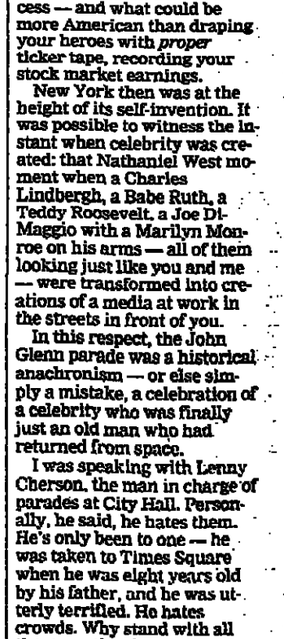
Four thousand officers were then dispatched — taken off their Monday morning shifts or called in to work extra time — and special editions of the New York Post and the Daily News were printed, to be sold exclusively along the parade route.

But then on the day itself, this terrible thing occurred: nobody came.

To say that nobody came is a slight exaggeration: there *were* people present, even if many of them had done nothing more than linger on a street corner after emerging from the subway and spotting John Glenn riding past in a bright red, 1953 Cadillac convertible. But by any normal estimate, the parade for John Glenn was a flop.

New York has more parades than any other city in the world. There is a parade, on average, every 10 days. Every 10 days, some essential function of the city ceases. There was one for Sammy Sosa, a man from the Dominican Republic who hit the second-most home runs in history. The important thing is this — he was second, and yet he got a parade. There was a parade for the city's baseball team, the Yankees, which I along with two and a half million other people attended, arriving three hours before it began, my head draped in toilet paper, an abundance of CGW and several pages from a computer manual.

The following Friday two million showed up along Sixth Avenue for the annual Halloween parade — a display of people, mainly gays, in costume. There was even a parade for Pochantas. But the prototype New York parade is actually a creation of the twenties, and is at the heart of the American notion of success — and what could be more American than draping your heroes with *proper* ticker tape, recording your stock market earnings.



Manhattan is the only city that dumps a bin of rubbish on its heroes' heads

New York then was at the height of its self-invention. It was possible to witness the instant when celebrity was created: that Nathaniel West moment when a Charles Lindbergh, a Babe Ruth, a Teddy Roosevelt, a Joe DiMaggio with a Marilyn Monroe on his arms — all of them looking just like you and me — were transformed into creations of a media at work in the streets in front of you.

In this respect, the John Glenn parade was a historical anachronism — or else simply a mistake, a celebration of a celebrity who was finally just an old man who had returned from space.

I was speaking with Lenny Cherson, the man in charge of parades at City Hall. Personally, he said, he hates them. He's only been to one — he was taken to Times Square when he was eight years old by his father, and he was utterly terrified. He hates crowds. Why stand with all those people when you can watch the same thing at home on television?

Why indeed? But why, then, live in a city?

Editor Dominic Lawson has some questions to answer, it seems, about his links with MI6

Spectator sport

Seumas Milne and Richard Norton-Taylor

THE exposure of the alleged links between MI6 and Dominic Lawson, editor of the Sunday Telegraph and former editor of the Spectator — claimed by some MPs to have been lubricated by payments into a foreign bank account — is once again throwing a shaft of light on the incestuous connections between the intelligence services, and parts of the media.

Lawson's brief denial that he was an agent, a term with a very narrow meaning in the intelligence world, has failed to quash the claim that he was at the very least a Secret Intelligence Services "asset" or "source". That was the view given credence in government circles yesterday.

The former Spectator editor was said to be "bemused and amused" by the accusation, first made by the MI6 whistleblower, Richard Tomlinson. But he has yet to furnish an explanation of how two lengthy articles appeared in in the Spectator in 1994 under the false name Keith Roberts. The pieces pushed the idea that Muslims were equally to blame for the carnage in Bosnia and had even deliberately shelled their own people at Sarajevo in a market queue.

Such rumours fitted with the then Conservative government's reluctance to intervene against Serbia. The true author of the Keith Roberts pieces was an MI6 officer who served in the Balkans as an "advisor" to the United Nations forces at that time but who left the agency in 1996.

All aspects of Lawson's life and journalistic work are now inevitably being examined, including the close relationship between his wife, Rosa Monckton, and Princess Diana — who it now emerges was the subject of a vast CIA file.

Was the Sunday Telegraph's publication last month of a prominent and sympathetic piece about the MI6-backed Iraqi National Accord opposition group, it was being asked yesterday, in any way connected with Lawson's intelligence friends?

The same goes for the "outing" of Richard Gott, the then Guardian literary editor, as a KGB "agent of influence" in the Spectator in 1994. Gott denied the accusation. But he had met KGB officials at their expense and resigned.

To anyone familiar with Gott's assorted anti-Soviet outbursts over the years, however, the idea was simply absurd. It seemed even more so when Oleg Gordievsky — a KGB defector run by MI6 and the source of the Gott allegation — went on to claim that the former Labour leader, Michael Foot, was also an agent of influence codenamed Boot.

> It is unacceptable to blur the lines between the media and the state

The intelligence dalliance with the media world is a longstanding one. The BBC has had repeated problems with MI6's recruitment of foreign correspondents over the years, and former MI5 officers say industrial correspondents were widely used to spy on leftwing union leaders during the 1970s and 1980s.

Former MI5 assistant director and Spycatcher author Peter Wright, claimed the security services had about 20 journalists working informally for it in the national press. Jon Snow, the Channel 4 news presenter was offered — and refused — a paid second job by MI5. Sandy Gall, former ITN reporter and newsreader, boasted of his work for MI6 in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

"Many British journalists benefited from CIA or MI6 largesse during the Cold War," the Times coolly informed its readers in the aftermath of the Gott affair. But the implication was clearly that that sort of thing had come to an end with the implosion of the Soviet Union.

In fact it has been business as usual — the planting of stories about countries such as Iraq, Libya, and Bosnia seems to be becoming routine — and yesterday the Times called on the parliamentary intelligence and security committee to investigate whether its rival's editor had indeed been "suborned" by MI6. Journalists often fish from the same pool as spies, who are also of course in the game of collecting information.

But doubling up as part-time intelligence agents clearly does no favours for their readers — or their colleagues, who can find themselves coming under unjustified and dangerous suspicion as a result.

There is a crucial dividing line between journalists talking to intelligence officers as sources whose claims can be corroborated or not, as the case may be, and the reproducing of uncheckable tip-offs as fact.

To work as an agent or "asset" is where the relationship goes beyond the normal one of journalist and contact — for example, where the journalist agrees to provide the intelligence services with information or space in his or her newspaper, operating as a kind of agent under journalistic cover.

This is a further, unacceptable step towards blurring the lines between media and state. If the allegations about Dominic Lawson help to make that confusion more difficult, then so much the better.



Far Eastern front . . . Calvert (foreground) and other Chindit commanders survey the ruins of a Burmese village in June 1944 IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Brigadier Michael Calvert

The jungle warrior

BRIGADIER Michael Calvert, who has died aged 85, was known as "Mad Mike" because, in soldier's parlance, "mad" means brave — and Mad Mike became a legend. During the second world war, in Burma, he led 77 Chindit Brigade behind the Japanese lines for more than six months.

For his superlative leadership Calvert was recommended for the VC by his three battalion commanders. Yet, for this outstanding and prolonged example of heroism, constantly in the face of the enemy, he received no British award, while even the anglophobe US General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell awarded him the American Silver Star. Many Chindits believed that Calvert's VC was blocked by a superior officer.

Born in India, the son of a senior official in the Indian Civil Service, Calvert was educated at Bradfield School and followed his brothers into the Royal Engineers. After reading mechanical science at Cambridge — where he won a blue for water-polo and swimming — he was commissioned in 1935. He was a totally dedicated, professional officer, with little time for the social mores of service life. He made his mark while posted to Hong Kong, and to Shanghai, where he first witnessed the professionalism and brutality of the Japanese forces.

By 1939 he was back in London in a desk job. He volunteered to work with the Finns in the "winter war" of 1939-1940 against the Russians, but the campaign was aborted and he joined the brief British expedition to Norway in April 1940. Here he developed his interest in explosives, and indulged his mordant sense of humour — usually linked to booby-traps.

As the German forces overwhelmed the British, Calvert stayed behind blowing up tunnels, bridges, railways and roads. Back in Britain, he became the explosives expert at Lochailort — where the first commandos were being trained — and spent frantic weeks with a lifelong friend, Peter Fleming, preparing explosive charges on key buildings in Kent and Sussex in case the Germans invaded. Then, in Australia — again as an explosives expert — he helped to establish the independent companies, the Australian equivalent of the commandos.

In October 1941, Calvert was posted to Burma to run

> With Wingate Calvert developed the concept of long-range penetration — infiltrating large units behind enemy lines

the Bush Warfare School, which was to train guerrillas to fight behind Japanese lines. Here he met Orde Wingate, who in 1942 became leader of the Chindits. From that moment of meeting the careers of these exceptional leaders were closely linked. Together they developed the concept of long-range penetration — infiltrating large units behind enemy lines and supplying them by air. Backed by the commander-in-chief in India, *General Wavell*, this came to fruition in the first Chindit operation.

Wingate commanded 77 Brigade in Operation Longcloth, which set off into Japanese territory in February 1943, with Calvert as a column commander. He carried out a model attack on Nankan, for which he won his first DSO. The operation made a substantial impact on the Japanese, but the Chindits lost a third of their number and were severely criticised by the regulars — especially those sitting safely in Delhi — although Churchill took up their cause. Soon, backed by the Americans as well, the Chindits were dramatically expanded, and Calvert became a brigadier commanding 77 Brigade.

In March 1944, supported by the American Air Commando, two Chindit brigades were ready to go in behind enemy lines but it was discovered that one of their two landing grounds was blocked. Calvert took his whole brigade to the other strip, and set up the first of Wingate's concept of "stronghold". Wingate took this name from the Bible's book of Zecharia: "Turn to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope," — as indeed did Calvert when he wrote *Prisoners Of Hope*, which, with his other classic, *Fighting Mad*, remains one of the best accounts of of frontline warfare.

Calvert also established White City, an offshoot of Broadway, where for weeks he repelled every attack several Japanese divisions could mount.

Wingate was killed just as White City was established, and then, because of weak leadership at the top, the Chindits were handed over to the paranoid Stilwell, who used them in a role for which they were neither trained nor equipped. Calvert's 77 Brigade was ordered to capture the heavily-defended town of Mogaung and, under his superb leadership, they achieved this. Yet for Broadway, White City, or Mogaung, Calvert received no British award. He was invalided home at the end of 1944, and in January 1945 was given command of the SAS for the final European campaigns. He received the French and Belgian Croix de Guerre.

The rest of Calvert's life was a tragic disaster. He briefly and unsuccessfully commanded a re-established SAS unit, called Malayan Scouts SAS, and was then posted to a humdrum base job in Soltau, Germany. He was drinking heavily, and his conduct as a fairly senior officer was certainly indiscreet. In 1951, he was court-martialled and found guilty of indecency

> The verdict was a travesty and an appeal was rejected. Thus this brave man died with his character unjustly besmirched

with German youths. His dismissal from the service destroyed his life — though he always maintained his innocence.

He went to Australia, and for a decade, as an alcoholic, suffered despair and degradation. He eventually overcame this, and in the 1960s returned to England, worked as an engineer for the Greater London Council, and became a distinguished military commentator. He then decided to follow a career as a writer, which condemned him to a life of penury.

Calvert's biography, *Mad Mike*, contained clear-cut evidence which proves that the court-martial verdict was unjust. His conviction stood on a single incident at his flat. One of the youths involved, now a respected member of the Soltau community, signed a statement two years ago stating that no indecency took place.

He explained that a group of youths had gone to Calvert's flat, and while one tried to engage him in conversation, the rest went round the flat and stole money, cigarettes and drink. Then they ran off. For this theft they were briefly imprisoned by the German police, but they were constantly pressurised by the British Military Police to agree to a charge of homosexuality against Calvert. Under this pressure, some of the youths had agreed, but, even before the court-martial, had withdrawn their evidence.

The verdict was a travesty of justice, but when, in 1997, an appeal — supported by more than one MP — was made to the British military authorities, it was rejected. Thus this brave man died with his character unjustly besmirched.

Not long before he died, the British Legion pilgrimage department, reflecting the high esteem in which Calvert is held throughout the country, took him back to Burma, to stand again on Pagoda Hill, and to visit White City and that place of carnage, Mogaung. Piers Storie-Pugh, who escorted him and made the video *Chindit Commander*, wrote: "He comes across as a tough, professional, courageous, honourable, humorous and compassionate soldier. That is how he should be remembered."

David Rooney

Michael Calvert, soldier, born March 6, 1913; died November 26, 1998

George Murcell

Shakespeare's man in Tufnell Park

GEORGE MURCELL, who has died aged 73, was a musician, linguist, horseman, sportsman, oenophilist, Shakespearean and arranger of stage fights — and he bestrode London's classical stage as a character actor for nearly four decades.

He was with Donald Wolfit's touring Shakespeareans for two seasons after leaving the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1949. With the Old Vic Company, under Tyrone Guthrie, he did another classical stint. During Peter Brook's West End heyday, Murcell turned up in Christopher Fry's *The Dark Is Light Enough* with Edith Evans, and in Jean Anouilh's *The Lark* (1955) with Dorothy Tutin. At the Royal Court he featured in Sam Wanamaker's *staging of The Threepenny Opera* and in Chekhov's *Platonov* starring Rex Harrison.

Murcell was the son of an English-Maltese mother and a Newfoundland father. He was born and raised in Naples, where he worked as a child singer and musician, before moving to London and attending Surrey County Technical College. It was wartime service in the Royal Air Force that confirmed his interest in theatre, and his looks and muscular manner led as often as not to his being cast as robust, no-nonsense foreigners.

It had been as Black Dog in *Treasure Island* (Fortune, 1949), his second professional role, that Murcell had caught the attention of Wolfit. Staying with the troupe, he toured nine classical plays. When Peter Hall's newly-formed Royal Shakespeare Company took over the Aldwych as its London branch in 1961, Murcell had two parts in Anouilh's *Becket*, and played Hortensio to Vanessa Redgrave's lead in *The Taming Of The Shrew*. In Michel Saint-Denis's production of *The Cherry Orchard* he was a memorably mercantile Lopahkin to Peggy Ashcroft's haughty Ranevsky and John Gielgud's dreamy Gaev.

He entered management in 1967 at Croydon and Richmond with his production of *She Stoops To Conquer*. Then in 1968 he became artistic director of St George's Elizabethan Theatre Ltd with the object of rebuilding Shakespeare's Globe in Tufnell Park, north London. It may sound like old hat now, but then the idea was a novelty. It opened in 1976.

The location was a dark, old Gothic church with hard pews, dubious acoustics and strange sight lines. But it had



Murcell . . . formidable

an atmosphere, and a Shakespearian repertoire. Critics might have sniffed but the profession rallied round and Murcell strove to interest the educational authorities in the development as an arts centre and to draw young people in. Guthrie was encouraging. So was the Greater London Council; and Alan Badel struck sparks as *Richard III* with Murcell as Buckingham. For some 14 years Murcell enjoyed some success with his playhouse.

Not that he abandoned acting elsewhere. In the mid-1980s he was back in the West End in the revival of John Osborne's *A Patriot For Me* from Chichester; and he also appeared in *Tovarich*. From the late 1940s he worked in the British cinema and later in Hollywood. More recently he was in the television series *Catherine The Great*.

George Murcell was married twice: in 1953 to Josephine Tweedie, with whom he had a daughter, and in 1960 to the actress Elvi Hale, with whom he had a son.

Eric Shorter

Ian Flintoff writes: The photograph showed George Murcell on the roof of a clapped-out church in Tufnell Park fixing tarpaulins in a rainstorm. He had decided it was time London had its own full-time Shakespeare theatre and this was the way to set about it. He would produce all the plays in turn.

I saw the photo while I was working as a spokesman at the European Commission in Brussels. I gave in my notice and wrote to Murcell; He and his fellow director and actor, Joseph O'Connor, gave me a job on the strength of a single reading of "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

George and his wife, Elvi Hale, staked a lot on St George's; they were formidably talented actors who could have made an easier living elsewhere. It will certainly be for his heroic Shakespeare venture that Murcell will most be remembered. But Sam Wanamaker's Globe project took off and was better sited. Funding in Tufnell Park grew slim, but Murcell persevered in bringing Shakespeare to the young. I partly owe the course of my own life to his willingness to try the untried.

George Murcell, actor, born October 30, 1925; died December 3, 1998

A Country Diary

GLOUCESTERSHIRE: The village baker, once a feature of every rural community, is now a rarity. So much bread is bought from supermarkets, wrapped, sliced and largely without taste. Bill and Clara, grandparents of my friend Lew, were village bakers in South Cerney through the early part of the century, and Lew grew up with the daily routine of the bakery as the memorable backdrop.

An early start to fire the brickbuilt oven occurred before sparrow's fart. The oven was fired with ash faggots and baked on residual heat after the ash was raked out. Local wheat, locally milled, made the dough, which was hand-mixed, for this was before rural electrification. The baking tins held cottage loaves and long tins, cakes and pastries too. Apart from sales in the warm and pleasant smelling shop, delivery was by horse and float, and the horse, no fool he, knew that if Bill was unaccompanied he had to stop outside the pub for a swift refreshment. If Clara was aboard, he had the sense to trot briskly past to the next scheduled delivery halt.

The village bakery had a community role greater than the obvious one in this period, for domestic ovens were usually only a small fireside cavity. So at Christmastide, the bakery was fired and open to take in the chickens and joints of beef, mutton and pork that were simply too big for the domestic ovens of the period. For one old penny, the festive bird was roasted ready for late morning collection. And for the summer outing of the village school, another special bake for the picnic lunch was part of this historic local tradition, which ensured that sandwiches tasting of the smuts from a steam locomotive could fuel the games of a summer day.

COLIN LUCKHURST

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

IN OUR article about black and Asian lawyers, pages 4 and 5, G2, yesterday, we said that these days many black policemen accused of crime asked Chris Cleverly to represent them. Then we quoted *Mr Cleverly as saying*, "It gives them, they think, a better, more appealing image." What he actually told us was that many *white* policemen ask him to represent them.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Surface mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 9697. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Birthdays

Field Marshal Lord Bramall, soldier, 75; **Ramsey Clark**, human rights lawyer, 71; **Frances Crook**, director, Howard League for Penal Reform, 46; **Jules Dassin**, film director, 86; **Honor Fraser**, model, 24; **Christopher Fry**, playwright, 91; **Cardinal Archbishop Jozef Glemp**, primate of Poland, 69; **Robson Green**, actor and singer, 34; **Lady Harlech**, chairman, English National Ballet, 64; **Prof Michael Harrison**, vice-chancellor, University of Wolverhampton, 57; **The Rt Rev Christopher Mayfield**, Bishop of Manchester, 63; **Lord Merlyn-Rees**, 78; **John Mott**, civil engineer, 72; **Brad Pitt**, film actor, 35; **Dr Joyce Reynolds**, Roman historian, 80; **Keith Richards**, Rolling Stone, 55; **Lord Robens**, former Vickers chairman, 88; **Steven Spielberg**, filmmaker, 52; **Arantxa Sanchez Vicario**, tennis player, 27.

Death Notices

CAMERON. Rebecca Jane, beloved daughter of Janet & Peter Cameron, fiancee of Oliver Gibson, sister of Charlotte, much loved granddaughter and niece, died peacefully on Tuesday 15 December. Loved by all who knew her, she made us all proud until the end and will continue to be an inspiration to us all. Service at St John's Church, Ashley Green on 23 December at 12 o'clock. Family flowers only, donations if wished to the Royal Marsden Hospital c/o Cooke's Funeral Services, 72 Broad Street, Chesham, Bucks HP5 3DX.

MORRISON. Alistair Dow, died 11th December 1998. Will be greatly missed by Stuart, Rebecca, Fergus and Maxim. Funeral to be held 8th January, Hereford Crematorium at 12.00 midday. No flowers please. Donations to British Heart Foundation.

■To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4707 between

society

Every Wednesday in the

The Guardian EUROPE

Don't try this at sea, page 15

Tomorrow: New year, new currency, no holiday

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239 9610
Fax: 0171-833 4456

FinanceGuardian

Chain clears 'promotional fog'



Arranging seasonal fare at Asda which yesterday heated up the store wars by announcing a range of permanent price cuts PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Supermarket war hots up

Roger Cowe

ASDA fired the latest shot in the supermarket price war when it yesterday unveiled a new strategy of permanently low prices instead of special promotions.

Chief executive Allan Leighton said the move had already cut grocery prices by 2 per cent — a step-change in competitiveness which is certain to provoke an aggressive response on prices from the other leading supermarkets. Sainsbury yesterday unveiled plans to extend its Reward card promotions.

Announcing sales which showed Asda has lost the lead in growth it held over supermarket rivals, Mr Leighton blamed the proliferation of price promotions this year for confusing customers.

"There has been a promotional fog," he said. "There are sales everywhere you go and consumers have become very confused by what is good value. The 'fog' has obscured our real value position."

The Asda boss promised to re-emphasise the chain's reputation for low prices at a time when other chains have put an increased emphasis on price, especially Sainsbury with its television advertising campaign, "Value to shout about," featuring John Cleese

Mr Leighton claimed that the gap between Asda prices and its main competitors' widened this year. But he said customer perception of the price position had moved in the other direction under the assault of special offers from Tesco, Sainsbury and Safeway.

As well as lower grocery prices, the campaign will include the relaunched Farm Stores range of 400 low-price products and a Big Saver brand of 120 lines offering bulk-buy savings.

Asda's chairman, Archie Norman, attempted to play down the threat of a price war. "There is no evidence there is going to be a sharp increase in price competition," he said.

But Andrew Fowler of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter said it was inevitable that there would be a greater emphasis on price in the New Year: "Retailers are already pushing the price side of the value equation harder. It is not the companies that set the competitive agenda, it's customers. And if we are going into a consumer recession, people's agendas change. Their perception of value means more about price and less about other factors."

Mr Norman, Conservative party chief executive and MP for Tunbridge Wells, dismissed rumours that he might leave the Commons, insisting he was still committed to the dual role of businessman and politician.

Announcing a 4 per cent rise in half-year profits to just under £200 million, Mr Norman said that the chain would restore its previous high growth.

Asda's food sales grew by less than 2 per cent in the half year, below the rate for the supermarket sector for the first time since the chain's recovery began seven years ago.

Mr Norman emphasised the continued high growth of the George clothing range, whose sales rose by 10 per cent excluding the impact of extra space.

Asda claims it will be the market leader in babywear by the beginning of next year and aims to increase total clothing sales from the current £600 million a year to £1 billion.

Expansion will include the addition of five stores bought yesterday from the Co-op. These stores will reopen next year under the Asda name as part of a 17-store expansion programme, which the company says will create 1,000 jobs.

Boost for British farmers

Roger Cowe

BRITISH farmers were given a boost today as supermarket operator Asda unveiled a £400 million package designed to stock shelves with home-produced meat, dairy and vegetables.

The "bring it back home" policy will ensure the supermarket favours British suppliers over overseas alternatives. It will be backed by a £4 million advertising campaign urging customers to buy British, and underpinned by more stable contracts for farmers and suppliers, offering guaranteed returns over a three-year period.

The National Farmers' Union president, Ben Gill, said: "This programme looks set to help livestock farmers and growers in Britain. It will bring extra confidence to the industry and provide farmers with more marketing opportunities."

Asda's chief executive, Allan Leighton, said: "We are saying to farmers: 'If your prices go down, our prices go down.'"

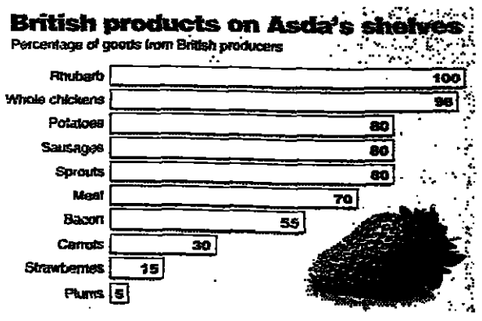
He outlined five measures which he said would help British farmers as well as Asda. "There is more the industry could have done for farmers and we believe that if we can lock in with them we can deliver fresher produce and lower prices and get a real competitive edge for both of us," he said.

The "Farming Five" campaign will extend the chain's promotion of British meat and its experiments with long-term contracts for producers of mushrooms and potatoes. Asda will agree targets for domestic purchases of a range of products, beginning at a farmers' conference in Leeds next month. It has already committed to increasing the proportion of British meat and sausages from 75 per cent to 90 per cent in three years.

Asda's chairman, Archie Norman, denied the move was a response to the Office of Fair Trading investigation of supermarkets. "There has recently been a lot of criticism," he said. "Some of it is not fair and some of it is wrong, but there are some things we can do better. The industry owes it to farmers to see them through a period of difficulty."

British products on Asda's shelves

Percentage of goods from British producers



Sainsbury adds to loyalty plan

SAINSBURY is to boost its Reward loyalty scheme with new ways in which customers can cash in points, *writes Roger Cowe*. The country's number two supermarket operator yesterday added British Gas and a clutch of high street chains to its Reward partners, who include Air Miles, Whitbread and British Telecom.

Outlets where Reward points can be used include Burger King, Harry Ramsden's chip shops, the Blockbuster video chain and the Arcadia group, which includes names such as Burton, Dorothy Perkins and Top Shop.

The 13 million Reward card holders can use a £2.50 voucher earned with their supermarket shopping to get £5 off a dress from Top Shop, £5 off their electricity bill with British Gas or a free video at Blockbuster. Harry Ramsden's will take a voucher in exchange for a meal worth up to £5.99 when another meal is bought, or it can be a ticket to a free Whopper or Big King meal at Burger King.

Sainsbury's marketing director, Kevin McCarten, said: "We are giving our loyal shoppers a chance to easily obtain great value with leading high street chains."

The Reward scheme was launched in June 1996, although chairman David Sainsbury had previously called the idea "nothing more than Green Shield stamps".

It gives shoppers the equivalent of 1p for every £1 they spend in the stores, which can be taken in vouchers or knocked off their grocery bill. Sainsbury has paid out a total of £375 million.

Eighty three per cent of all supermarket customers claimed last year to be Reward card holders. New members are signing up at the rate of 50,000 a week.

But one senior marketing figure yesterday criticised the Reward extension. David Miller, a consultant who was previously chairman of two leading advertising agencies, said: "This is clearly sales promotion gone mad. Loyalty schemes which are driven by plastic cards and money off are not loyalty strategies at all. Loyalty is an emotion which is earned through regular, high quality brand experience, not money off vouchers."

Banks and retailers eye energy market

David Gow
Industrial Editor

SOME of Britain's biggest brand names, including retailers and banks, are planning to sell electricity and gas to millions of domestic consumers, Scottish and Southern Energy executives said yesterday.

Jim Forbes, chief executive of the group formed this week from the approved £5 billion merger of Scottish Hydro-Electric and Southern Electric, said it had already held discussions with such firms.

Supermarket groups such as Sainsbury and Tesco have captured substantial slices of the retail banking market and are among those eyeing the energy scene, which is being opened to competition.

But Mr Forbes and Roger Young, deputy chairman, said others wanted to enter the market once the dust of deregulation had settled. But they refused to identify the potential partners.

Scottish and Southern has 3.3 million electricity consumers on its books and supplies another million through links with other regional electricity companies. About a third of these have signed up for discount "dual fuel" deals for electricity and gas through Argos, the catalogue shopping group, in a foretaste of the projects now being discussed.

Scottish and Southern also supplies 250,000 gas consumers in the south of England, with 60,000 more registered to switch to it. It aims to provide electricity to 6 million and gas to 1 million consumers within a few years.

But the group could capture a far bigger share of both markets, 24 million for electricity and 19 million for gas, through deals with household-brand names. Scottish and Southern would pay for the right to use the brands.

Rising sales offer light in the darkness

Aggressive price-cutting is helping retailers, writes **Charlotte Denny**

GLIMMERS of hope that the economy might avoid a crash landing emerged yesterday as new figures showed retail sales rebounded last month, while manufacturers' worries about output have eased.

Retail sales volumes rose last month for the first time since August, according to the Office for National Statistics. Volumes increased by 0.8 per cent in November bringing the annual rate of increase up to 2.6 per cent.

The strongest rebounds occurred in clothing and footware, where sales were up by 1.4 per cent month on month. Analysts said aggressive price-cutting had encouraged shoppers to spend. "It's no coincidence that the area seeing the fastest sales growth — clothing — has also seen the biggest price cuts," said Jonathan Loynes of HSBC markets. "Clothing inflation is currently -1.5 per cent, its lowest rate since 1953."

Analysts had expected another decline after recent surveys reported shops were gloomy about their sales last month.

"The strength of sales in November is surprising given widespread reports from retailers of tough trading conditions," said David Coleman of CIBC. "All of the major retail categories returned a decent performance last month, making it very difficult to blame distortions in specific sectors."

Mr Loynes said the cuts to interest rates by the Bank of England in October and November had helped bolster shoppers' confidence. Some analysts said yesterday's figures increase the chance the Bank's monetary policy committee will keep rates on hold in January. But Mr Loynes said the MPC appeared to have decided rates had to return to a lower level and were less concerned about immediate data.

Manufacturers were also cheered last month by the lower cost of borrowing. Output expectations in November rebounded to their highest level since the summer, according to the Confederation of British Industry's latest snapshot of the sector's health. Order books also improved slightly over the month.

But the survey still points to a recession for industry next year. While 22 per cent of firms expect output to rise over the next four months, 35 per cent expect it to fall, a negative balance of 13 per cent.

Order books although up on October's levels are well down on the same point a year ago. Fifty one per cent of companies said total order books were below normal; just 13 per cent said they were above, a negative reading of 38 per cent. In December last year the survey was still showing a positive balance of 2 per cent for order books.

"There isn't a great deal of festive cheer in this survey for UK manufacturers," said Sudhir Junankar, CBI associate director of economic analysis. "It is clear that output is still heading firmly in a downward direction."

Notebook

All quiet on the eastern front



Alex Brummer

THE Anglo-American air strikes against Iraq have left financial and commodity markets unfazed. In contrast to the Gulf war when Iraq invaded Kuwait, there has been no dramatic rise in oil prices and no direct threat to global supplies — despite the US rhetoric about protecting strategic interests in the Gulf. Unless Saddam responds to the missile and bombing raids by disabling oilfields or destabilising Gulf neighbours, the impact on oil prices will be negligible.

It is, after all, only a week since over-supply and falling demand forced the price of benchmark Brent crude below $10 a barrel. In the latest session of trading oil was changing hands at $11.24, slightly down on the price as the bombing raids began.

Elsewhere on the financial markets equities appear to be taking matters in their stride. Unless the raids go wrong, by leading to a broader conflagration, the bigger risk is likely to be the impeachment process in the US. This is a serious political uncertainty at a time when President Clinton has been central to advancing global financial and economic reform in response to this year's global crisis. This together with gloomy earning reports, will be of more significance to equities.

Normally, international uncertainty benefits the dollar and gold as "safe havens." Here too there has been little movement. The main influence on the foreign exchange markets at present is the shifting of portfolios and reserves ahead of the birth of the euro. That too could change if Middle-East stability is disrupted as a result of what has been defined as a relatively limited action.

The most serious concern is that the military actions will have a detrimental effect on trade and tourism in the Middle-East, at a time when the region is already suffering as result of low oil prices and previous security scares. That will not help sagging world output.

Inspection hitches

THE release of the Department of Trade report into the closure of Chancery Bank five years after the inspectors were appointed and almost a decade after the "creative accounting" occurred, is a footnote to the early 1990s. Chancery was a minor financial institution which floated on the stock market and deliberately inflated its profits to fool depositors, shareholders and regulators. This was not BCCI or Barings.

Yet while it took the Board of Banking Supervision (now shifted in a different guise to the Financial Services Authority) just five months to produce an authoritative report on the far more important Barings collapse and apportion responsibility, it has taken the DTI and its inspectors five years, to deal with Chancery, a much simpler institution. As a result the report just released is all but an irrelevance.

The DTI system of inspection has, over the years, proved an important brake on irresponsible and inappropriate behaviour by directors and the advisers to public companies, but it is worthless if it takes up to a decade for criticisms and recommendations to emerge.

We are still waiting for the report on the circumstances surrounding the Mirror Group flotation, despite the fact that seven years have passed since Robert Maxwell's death. If it was possible to produce a thorough report on the complexities of Barings within months, then the DTI should be able to do better than this. At present its investigations are in danger of becoming a long-running farce.

Siemens savings

THE idea that National Savings, founded by Gladstone more than a century ago, should end up in the hands of a German group — Siemens — may seem unpatriotic. But a nation which has already farmed out a chunk of its tax collection, self-assessment, to the American concern EDS is unlikely to be moved by this development.

Under the 15-year contract signed between National Savings and Siemens, much of the current national savings back-office staff will be transferred to the German group for the next 15-years, in a deal worth £900 millions to Siemens.

What are the advantages of this arrangement? Firstly, the senior executive of National Savings will be able to concentrate on the core function of collecting savings on behalf of the Government. This is still the main vehicle used by government to encourage official saving by smaller investors.

Secondly, it will give National Savings the chance to modernise. The savings field has become highly competitive in recent years as a result of a series of innovations. These include the arrival of new 'direct' players in the marketplace which use sophisticated call centres and IT systems to capture savings; the spread of financial services to the retail sector and the increasingly use of PCs and the internet for financial activity.

If Siemens can provide National Savings with a fresh edge in terms of technology and cost, then it becomes possible that it can become a more effective savings medium.

Ernie acquires German master

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

THE Government yesterday transferred the bulk of the organisation of National Savings to the German electronics and engineering group Siemens.

Announcing the move, Patricia Hewitt, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said: "This contract between National Savings and Siemens Business Services is a milestone in the Government's policy of co-operation between the public and private sectors.

"It will create a new public service partnership, bringing together the strengths of the two organisations to deliver real benefits to all the stakeholders involved."

Although National Savings products such as Premium Bonds — the Ernie of popular renown — will continue to be guaranteed by the state, operations will be administered by Siemens Business Services from April. All but 120 of National Savings' 3,970 staff, split between centres in Blackpool, Durham and Glasgow, will be transferred to the company.

National Savings, an executive agency of the Treasury, was set up in 1861 by Gladstone as the Post Office's savings bank, aiming to encourage the poor to put money aside.

The Government decided that a private-sector partner would help the agency compete in a competitive retail market dominated by banks and building societies.

National Savings said that the contract, which is for 15 years, would allow the agency to respond more flexibly to customer demands and provide a better service through, for example, selling by phone and over the Internet.

Siemens Business Services describes itself as one of the UK's fastest-growing technology services and outsourcing companies.

It has partnerships with the Passport Agency, Stationery Office, Employment Service and Welsh Office.

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Austria 18.97	Greece 455.33	Malta 0.608	South Africa 9.60
Belgium 55.74	Hong Kong 12.57	Netherlands 3.0406	Spain 229.51
Canada 2.5091	India 71.32	New Zealand 3.05	Sweden 13.09
Cyprus 0.79	Ireland 1.0859	Norway 12.39	Switzerland 2.18
Denmark 10.34	Israel 6.93	Portugal 274.61	Turkey 496,083
Finland 8.22	Italy 2,686	Saudi Arabia 6.09	USA 1.6338
France 9.0843			

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Titanic's flying squad alarms insurer

Lisa Buckingham

A GLOBAL warning has been issued to passenger ship operators to be on their guard for copycat Leonardo Di Caprios who risk falling overboard as they attempt to mimic the King of the World scene in the film Titanic.

As the Titanic touring theme park opened at Wembley Arena, shipowners were being warned that several young men have been caught emulating the scene in which Di Caprio mounts the bow of the Titanic and spread his arms in mock flight.



Bow waves ... Leonardo Di Caprio's antics at the sharp end in Titanic have inspired emulators, according to the P&I Club PHOTOGRAPH: MERIEW WALLACE

Fearing a spate of insurance claims on behalf of youths who lose their balance and are flung into the ocean, one of the world's biggest marine underwriting companies, the UK P&I Club, has issued a bulletin to passenger ship companies warning them.

The problem apparently came to light on American cruise ships whose owners are plagued by bizarre insurance claims, notably from passengers whose attempts to commit suicide were thwarted by vigilant crew members.

But the P&I Club says it is not only cruise ship companies which should be on guard. "Ferries are probably a more likely area of concern, bearing in mind that it is more probable, with the younger age profile of the passengers, to anticipate a young man showing off to his young lady.

"The older age profile of passengers in some sectors of the cruise market might make such antics a bit more difficult."

A spokesman for P&O, the British operator of large cruise ships and seagoing ferries, said he was unaware of any Di Caprio emulations on any of its vessels. "But the next time we have a group of movie buffs on board we will have to watch out."

The insurer had not discerned any increase in "loss overboard" claims or heart attacks among older passengers essaying flights of fancy with vintage versions of Kate Winslet.

But they warned shipping companies: "While the bow area on most ships is off limits to passengers, extra caution might be warranted for a while until the popularity of the film diminishes."

Merger of US rivals eases path for Gates

Tri@l Week 9

Mark Tran in New York

AFTER an unrelenting barrage of negative publicity for several weeks, Microsoft finally received encouraging news as its landmark anti-monopolies trial adjourned until January.

Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson, who has shown scant sympathy for Microsoft, surprised the court this week by declaring that the $4.2 billion (£2.5 billion) merger of America Online and Netscape could have "an immediate effect on the definition of the market".

As a result, he said, he might agree to Microsoft's request for additional evidence related to the merger that could be used in its defence.

Microsoft has consistently argued that it is not a monopoly as the technology market changes so rapidly. But Microsoft's critics point out that its 90 per cent dominance of operating systems has lasted for several years, so definitions of markets and monopoly go to the heart of the Microsoft case.

Judge Jackson's decision provided a surprising and intriguing twist as the trial breaks up for Christmas. All his previous rulings and comments have favoured the government. In one telling moment, he complained that Microsoft chairman Bill Gates "has not been particularly responsive" to questioning. So his decision on AOL-Netscape was particularly welcome for Microsoft's lawyers.

"Potentially this is damaging to the government's case," said William Kovacevic, of George Washington University. "The judge is picking up on the company's theme that technological dynamism cures all ills and he also is clearly looking at the question of whether there is a monopoly at all."

The AOL-Netscape merger is not the only big deal in the computer software industry since the start of the Microsoft trial. Earlier this week, Sun Microsystems and Oracle, two Microsoft rivals, announced plans to create a new business computer that does not require operating software, a move aimed at Microsoft's fast-growing Windows NT software for businesses.

Judge Jackson is still expected to rule in the government's favour when the trial ends early next year. The company is banking on the appeals court, which earlier this year backed the company's contention that it has the right to bundle its Internet browser with the Windows operating system.

But if Judge Jackson believes that the AOL-Netscape merger and others do furnish appropriate competition, he might well come up with modest rather than drastic remedies to curb Microsoft's behaviour.

The planned AOL-Netscape merger already has prompted South Carolina to drop out of the lawsuit brought by the federal government and 20 states against Microsoft. Charlie Condon, South Carolina's attorney general, said that he could no longer justify pursuing a case "made moot by the actions of the competitive marketplace".

South Carolina was not a key plaintiff in the case, but its defection has led Microsoft to redouble its efforts to lobby other states to drop the case.

Until now, Microsoft has taken a battering in court as one government witness after another makes the case against the software company. When the trial resumes in January, it will be Microsoft's turn to present its witnesses. The government's central contention is that Microsoft uses its Windows monopoly as a club to beat other companies. The latest companies to testify to such pressure were IBM and Disney.

In a Microsoft memo cited by the government, Microsoft executive Joachim Kempin urged Mr Gates to use the Windows monopoly "to apply some pressure" to persuade IBM to drop its support of rival software.

In another deposition played in court, a Disney executive said that he "didn't like being strong-armed" by Microsoft. As part of a deal to promote Disney's Web site on Windows, Steve Wadsworth of Disney said that he reluctantly agreed to promote the software company's browser to the exclusion of Netscape.

Bank blamed in pay fiasco

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

THE row over who is to blame for the Government's discredited average earnings figures, suspended last month after doubts about their accuracy, escalated yesterday when MPs criticised the Bank of England deputy governor, Mervyn King, for his role in the fiasco.

The Commons Treasury committee is anxious that the Office for National Statistics should not be made a scapegoat. It said it was dismayed that the Bank and Treasury had been aware for many months about proposed changes to the way the figures were compiled yet only raised concerns the day before publication.

The committee singled out Mr King, saying he had not attended any of the meetings of the ONS's statistics advisory committee, of which he is a member, where statistical priorities are discussed with outside bodies. It also called into question the decision to involve Mr King in the subsequent inquiry into the data announced by the Treasury.

The price of control

THE Treasury committee urged the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to rethink his plan to retain control over the Retail Prices Index once the ONS's new operational framework is decided next year.

To improve the integrity of official statistics, the Government is considering four options, including establishing an independent statistical commission.

The committee said the provision keeping control of the RPI in the Chancellor's hands was "one of the few remaining opportunities for real or perceived interference in figures produced by the ONS".

It added: "Since this is precisely the sort of issue which the Green Paper sought to tackle and since the Treasury was unable to provide the explanation of the benefits of the present arrangments which we sought, we see no justification for its continuance."

The average earnings figures were closely monitored by the Bank of England monetary policy committee in the first half of the year when they appeared to show a build-up of inflation pressure. They were a significant consideration when the MPC put up interest rates in June by half a points to 7.5 per cent.

In October the ONS published two sets of revisions within a week which contradicted the earlier data. The index was suspended on November 2 and two inquiries announced, one by the ONS and the other by the Chancellor, headed by Mr King and the Treasury permanent secretary, Sir Andrew Turnbull.

The Treasury committee said it remained to be convinced that it was wise for the Chancellor and the ONS to review the earnings data concurrently, or for Mr King to be involved in reviewing managerial issues in the ONS.

"We do not dispute Mr King's credentials," said the committee. "The issue is the perception of Mr King's independence: one witness commented that 'It has been argued (unhealthily but understandably) that the Treasury is . . . looking for scapegoats for decisions (higher interest rates) that might now look injudicious', adding that 'If the ONS is to be the Chancellor's department he should manage it and deal with these issues internally'."

Despite continuing to express concern about the tightness of the labour market, the MPC reversed June's rate rise in October and has since cut rates twice more by half a point each time.

The average earnings figures remain suspended, pending completion of the two reviews. The Treasury committee recommended that both of them be published.

In a letter to the committee, released last night, the Bank governor, Eddie George, made three points, endorsed by the Treasury.

He dismissed Mr King's absence from SAC meetings as irrelevant. He had wanted to resign last year because meetings clashed with other commitments but Tim Holt, ONS director, asked him to stay on to contribute by reading and commenting on its papers."

The Bank was aware of the changes being made to the average earnings figures, but even the ONS analysts could not predict their effect until very close to publication. "We were therefore unable to raise any concerns until we saw the rebased data 36 hours prior to publication."

He indicated that Sir Andrew was overseeing managerial issues covered by the external review.



King: Missed meetings

Pride before fall for boss of failed property lender

Dan Atkinson

CHANCERY, the aggressive property lender that crashed in 1991 with losses of £45 million, puffed up its profits and misled regulators, the Department of Trade and Industry said yesterday.

Co-founder Harvey Cohen may have been "motivated by pride" when he allowed Chancery to claim as profit fees due on risky lending, said DTI inspectors. The bank's "creative accounting" meant that 1990 profits of nearly £8 million were overstated by about £2 million. Auditors Arthur Andersen "were misled, intentionally or not" in relation to these accounts, the inspectors said.

Returns submitted regularly to the Bank of England, then the body charged with supervising all banks, "contained serious errors ... These inaccurate returns misled the Bank in its decision-making."

In the wake of publication of the inspectors' report, the DTI is to go to court seeking orders disqualifying Mr Cohen, former deputy chief executive Geoffrey Berger and Michael Hill, former managing director of Chancery's banking subsidiary, from acting as directors or controllers of any company.

Chancery specialised in lending on property developments which other banks shunned. Mr Hill told inspectors Anthony Fausset and Robert Chandler that, when other lenders dropped out, such borrowers "quite often turned up at our doorstep". These were risky borrowers, so Chancery charged a special fee. But, because the bank declared this fee as straight profit, instead of booking it in a more prudent way, that puffed up profits. The inspectors reported: "[Not] only did they deceive the market, they deceived themselves." Creative accounting inflated the £7.9 million profits for 1990 by £2 million, the report said.

● An independent enforcement committee will hear cases against firms and individuals accused by the Financial Services Authority of breaking civil rules such as those prohibiting market abuse, it emerged yesterday. The committee, which will include public-interest members and people drawn from the City, will be completely separate from FSA investigators. Those found guilty by the committee will be able to appeal to an independent tribunal.

News in brief

New takeover chief named

The Takeover Panel, which supervises UK mergers and acquisitions, named Patrick Drayton, a director of Schroders, as its new director-general. Drayton, aged 44, will be on a two-year leave from Schroders. He replaces Alistair Defriez, who returns to Warburg Dillon Read, the investment banking arm of UBS AG. The move comes as the European Commission looks to harmonise the rules for mergers and acquisitions across Europe. — *Bloomberg*

C&W's 999 update

Telecoms regulator Oftel announced yesterday it had accepted a telephone company's action plan to improve its 999 service after complaints over accuracy from the police. Derbyshire Police Authority complained in July that Cable & Wireless Communications operators were not giving accurate addresses for some emergency callers. CWC is now overhauling its database. Until the overhaul is completed in March, CWC will make weekly reports to Oftel.

450 to get call-up

Information company Experian UK is to create 450 vacancies at a new telephone call centre. The complex in Preston, Lancashire, will handle incoming and out-going calls for companies from the financial, retail and utility sectors.

Car wars warning

BMW chairman Bernd Pischetsrieder said he expects the price war started by Japanese car makers in the US may expand into Europe, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung reports.

Growth will be hit if shares bubble bursts, says OECD

Charlotte Denny

A TWENTY per cent decline in overvalued stock markets around the globe could reduce the growth of 1.7 per cent predicted for the industrialised world next year to a figure of about 1 per cent, the West's leading think tank warned yesterday.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development says that stock markets are still well overvalued by historical standards, increasing the risk that shares prices could crash again. But if the bubble of overpriced equities bursts, consumer confidence would be hit as the value of pensions and other investments declines, in turn leading to a slowdown in growth.

The Paris-based thinktank believes that there is considerable risk of another decline in equity markets, particularly in the US where the relationship between prices and earnings is most out of line with historic trends.

"Various benchmarks suggest we are a little uncomfortable about equity prices in America, and a little less concerned about elsewhere," Michael Fenier, acting head of the OECD's economic policy studies department, said at a news conference in Paris to mark the thinktank's biannual economic outlook.

"Our analysis is that in the United States, and perhaps Canada, [equity price] levels are hard to justify and they run the risk of a correction," he said.

Mr Feiner said that markets had continued to rise since it first highlighted this risk of a fresh slide in mid-November. "Our comments on over-valuation are even stronger now," he said. A 20 per cent fall in big stock markets could shave one percentage point off US growth next year, and 0.7 percentage points off growth throughout the 29 countries in the OECD.

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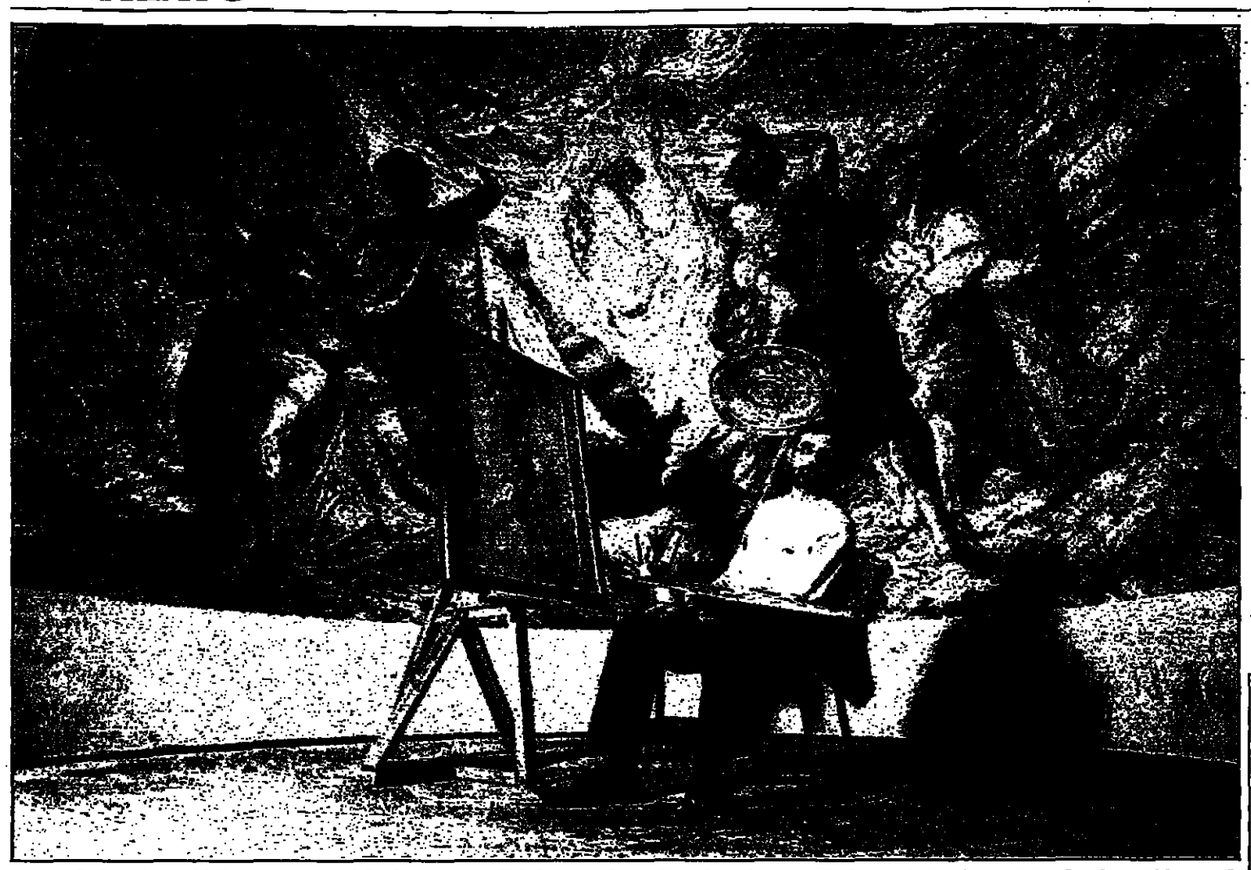
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Art for God's sake . . . Neil Harvey at work in the manner of his baroque hero, Tiepolo, using a preliminary study; above right, the view of his mural, Resurrection, to be seen by the congregation at St Brigid's in Birmingham when it is finally complete next year PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD LEA-HAIR

Work of devotion seeks to resurrect spirit of baroque



John Ezard on Britain's largest church mural in modern times

"CAN YOU do something with that wall?" the parish priest asked Neil Harvey. After that his life took a very strange shape.

Eight years and up to 5 million brush strokes later, Mr Harvey's answer is reaching its final form — the biggest, most ambitious altar mural in a British church in modern times. His Christ, double life-size, bursts from the tomb into a heavenly sky with the flourish of a baroque masterpiece. But the astonished Roman guards below have a touch of Lucien Freud in their limbs and faces.

Resurrection was commissioned by St Brigid's, a medium-sized Catholic church in the Birmingham suburb of Northfield, but is the size of a cathedral altarpiece. It has taken seven years, almost as long as a Renaissance work.

It was not meant to. But to paint with the scale and ambition of Mr Harvey's heroes, Tiepolo and Veronese, became an obsession with him. "I wanted to do something that reacted against the reductionism of modern church art," he said.

Mr Harvey, aged 38, an award winning graduate of the Royal Academy school, was previously a portrait painter. Since 1990 he has lived on grants of £4,000 to £5,000 a year from Birmingham archdiocese, plus help from his parents. "It is a slightly humiliating situation, but I have no choice." He hopes for more reward when the painting is valued when finished next March or April. He also hopes that it will last for as long as a Renaissance work, and has used plaster of lime putty made from crushed Carrara marble laced with linseed oil. The recipe, unused for 400 years, came from a 16th century painter, Girolamo Muziano.

"Processions of people have come to see it and I have had nothing but support from the congregation," he said.

Some already call it a masterpiece. But Mr Harvey prefers the 16th-century meaning of the word — "something you produce to show you are a qualified painter."

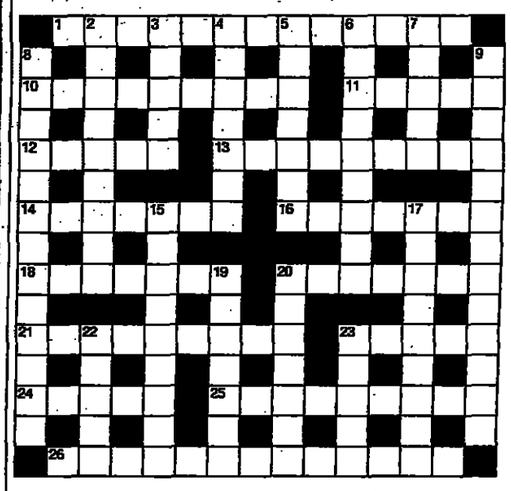
Of course, he muses, there is always the risk that St Brigid's might in the future become redundant and the building be sold. "What can be done with my painting if that happens, God only knows."

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Guardian Crossword No 21,461

Set by Fawley



Across

1 Standard aimed for by rivals in fast-track promotion (9,4)
10 Extra striker, perhaps — someone different (3,3,3)
11 Existing male domain (5)
12 Loves to meet here and go by short route (5)
13 Somewhat stupid and unreasonable (1,3,5)
14 Company splashed money about — ignoring this? (7)
16 Historically significant chapel, with nothing changed (7)
18 The first person making formal speech (7)
20 Nice view across the bay from here? Best in a storm (7)
21 Space traveller always returns for leaves, based on earth? (5,4)
23 This frequency is painful to the ears (5)
24 Suddenly left Adriatic port (5)
25 Being very fond of a party piece? (9)
26 Could one have grasped the thread of the industrial revolution from this? (8,5)

Down

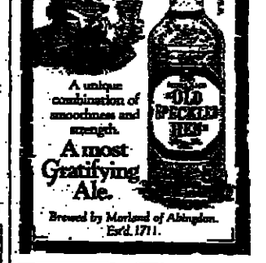
2 Botching DIY, he has awkward situation where concealment's possible (5-4)
3 One used to have a couple of pints (5)
4 Divorcee, old and getting high, is marrying into different society (7)
5 Get wound up by hospital dept on the booze, perhaps (7)
6 Basic pay for visit after midnight? (5-4)
7 Family responsible for fiddles — some dramatic (5)
8 Part-exchanged TV range? Specify all points in order (3,3,7)
9 Stop turning at this point, somewhere outside London? (3,4)
15 Finished school report: "... acted like a pig" (9)
17 Twice, in bar, he upset traditional Irish (9)
19 Car designer in the red usually (7)
20 Lasting result of gaol — gen being analysed (7)
22 A Yank turned up, giving kind of weight in airline operation (3-2)
23 Feel sick in a lift (5)

Solution tomorrow

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O	A	X		N		U		S		X		R		
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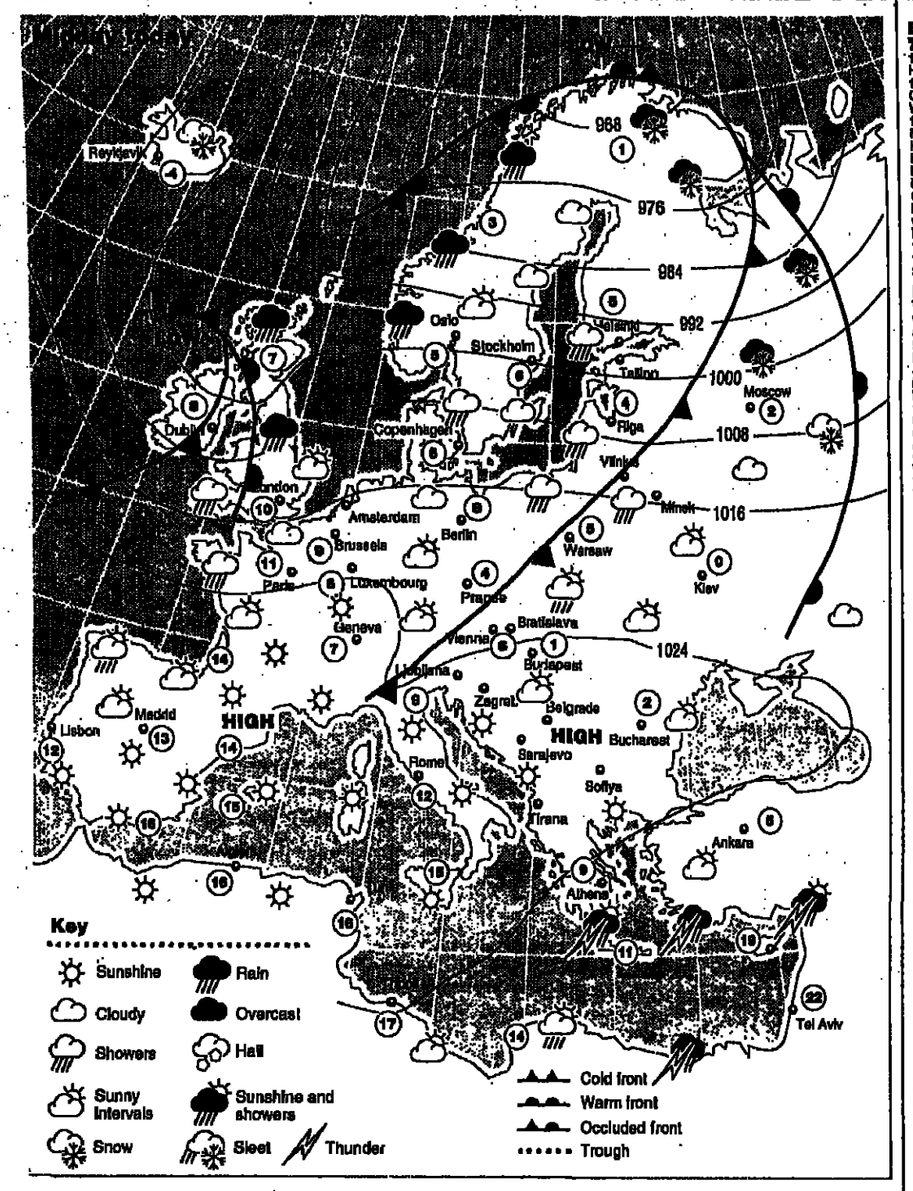
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The weather in Europe



Key

Sunshine · Rain · Cloudy · Overcast · Showers · Hail · Sunny intervals · Sunshine and showers · Snow · Sleet · Thunder

Forecast for the cities

Today

	max	min	weather
Algiers	16	9	M
Amsterdam	7	5	R
Athens	14	7	R
Berlin	8	5	F
Bonn	9	6	Dr
Brussels	9	5	Dr
Copenhagen	6	4	D
Crete	17	8	R
Geneva	7	-2	F
Larnaca	19	11	Sh
London	10	5	R
Madrid	13	2	M
Male	8	7	M
Nice	14	6	S
Oslo	3	1	S
Paris	11	8	F
Rome	12	4	S
Stockholm	2	-2	F
Tunis	18	7	F
Vienna	8	-2	C

Tomorrow

	max	min	weather
Algiers	16	5	F
Amsterdam	8	2	Dr
Athens	11	7	Sh
Berlin	7	2	Sh
Bonn	8	2	Sh
Brussels	7	2	Sh
Copenhagen	0	0	Dr
Crete	15	10	Th
Geneva	-3	0	Sh
Larnaca	19	10	F
London	7	0	Sh
Madrid	11	4	F
Male	8	7	M
Nice	13	6	F
Oslo	-2	-2	Sn
Paris	8	3	Sh
Rome	13	4	C
Stockholm	-1	-3	Sn
Tunis	16	9	F
Vienna	6	2	C

Sunday

	max	min	weather
Algiers	18	7	Sh
Amsterdam	5	0	Dr
Athens	14	10	S
Berlin	4	-1	Dr
Bonn	5	-1	Sn
Brussels	5	-1	F
Copenhagen	3	-2	C
Crete	18	12	D
Geneva	4	0	Sh
Larnaca	20	9	Th
London	5	0	F
Madrid	11	0	F
Milan	7	0	C
Nice	11	8	Sh
Oslo	0	-5	S
Paris	8	0	Dr
Rome	14	6	F
Stockholm	1	-5	Sn
Tunis	17	9	F
Vienna	7	0	F

C cloudy, Dr drizzle, F fair, Fg fog, H hail, R rain, S sleet, Sn snow, Sh showers, Th thunder. * (previous day's reading)

Around the world

Yesterday's lunchtime reports

Ajaccio	C	13	55
Algiers	S	17	63
Amsterdam	Sh	7	45
Anchorage	S	-11	12
Athens	C	11	52
Auckland	D	23	73
B'Aires	S	17	63
Barbados	C	29	84
Barcelona	S	14	57
Belgrade	C	6	43
Berlin	C	7	45
Bermuda	Dr	20	70
B'mnd	F	11	52
Bombay	S	31	88
Bordeaux	C	4	39
Boston	D	8	46
Brit'ava	F	-5	23
Brussels	F	11	52
Budapest	S	9	48
Cairo	S	19	66
Calcutta	S	25	77
Calgary	C	-5	23
Canberra	F	18	79
Cape Town	D	24	75
Casablanca	S	16	61
Chicago	C	6	43
Christchch	F	16	61
Cork	D	10	50
Dakar	C	25	77
Delhi	S	10	50
Denver	S	13	55
Dhaka	S	27	81
Dublin	C	8	46
Dubrovnik	F	14	57
Faro	C	17	63
Florence	C	10	50
Frankfurt	Fg	3	37
Geneva	C	4	39
Gibraltar	C	17	63
Hamburg	C	7	45
Helsinki	C	-1	30
Hong Kong	F	21	70
Honolulu	F	23	73
Ibiza	S	15	59
Innsbruck	F	2	36
Istanbul	S	8	46
Jersey	S	12	54
Jerusalem	C	14	57
Joh'burg	F	25	77
Karachi	S	23	73
Kiev	F	1	34
Kingston	F	31	88
Larnaca	S	19	66
Lima	C	25	77
Lisbon	C	11	52
London	C	8	46
Los Angeles	S	27	81
Luxembourg	F	8	43
Madrid	S	11	52
Majorca	S	16	61
Malaga	F	18	64
Malta	C	15	59
Manila	C	32	90
Melbourne	C	18	64
Mexico City	S	19	66
Miami	F	17	63
Milan	S	9	48
Montreal	F	4	39
Moscow	C	1	34
Munich	C	6	43
Nairobi	F	19	66
Naples	F	14	57
New Delhi	Fg	11	52
New Orleans	S	14	57
Nice	C	14	57
Oslo	C	0	32
Paris	S	10	50
Perth	S	29	84
Prague	F	6	43
Reykjavik	C	0	32
Rhodes	S	17	63
Rio de Jan	F	31	88
Rome	M	12	54
Salzburg	C	5	41
Singapore	C	30	86
Stockholm	C	0	32
Strasbourg	Fg	3	37
Sydney	C	22	72
Tel Aviv	S	17	63
Tenerife	S	22	72
Tokyo	S	17	63
Toronto	C	1	34
Tunis	S	15	59
Valencia	S	15	59
Vancouver	C	6	43
Venice	S	9	48
Vienna	C	6	43
Warsaw	M	3	37
Washington	C	9	48
Wellington	C	17	63
Zurich	M	2	36

European weather outlook

Scandinavia

West facing coasts and mountains in Norway will be dull and windy with rain. Further east, it will be largely fine and dry. Finland will have some snow in the north and east, but western areas will be milder with some drizzle. Highs -1C in the north, 3-7C in the south.

Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Switzerland

Mostly fine and dry with plenty of sunshine, with a foggy start in many places. The fog slow to clear from some valleys. The Low countries will become breezy with rain threatening from the west later. Highs 6 9C.

France

Northern France will be cloudy with rain spreading from the west. However, elsewhere in France will be largely fine and dry with plenty of sunshine, but morning fog will be slow to clear in some areas. Highs 8-10C in the north-east, but generally 11-14C elsewhere

Spain and Portugal

Mostly fine and settled with plenty of winter sunshine throughout the day. However, there will be a chilly start with morning fog lingering for a time in valleys. The northern mountains of Spain will see more cloud than elsewhere, with some light showers. Highs 10-14C, but 17 or 18C along southern coasts.

Italy

Fine, dry and settled, with winter sunshine in many areas. However, the northern valleys will have fog lingering well into the day. Highs from 8-10C in the north up to 17C over Sicily

Greece

Southern parts will start with thundery showers, but these will gradually clear leaving most places cold, but fine and dry. Highs 5-6C inland, 9-12C over the islands.

Television and Radio

BBC 1

7.00am Business Breakfast. 9.00 Breakfast News. 10.00 Kilroy. 10.45 Style Challenge. 11.05 City Hospital. 11.40 News; Regional News and Weather. 12.00 Good Living with Jane Asher. 12.25 Can't Cook, Won't Cook. 12.55 News; Regional News and Weather. 1.25 Neighbours. 1.50 The Weather Show. 2.00 News. 2.30 Regional News. 2.40 Neighbours. 3.05 Battersea Dogs' Home. 4.05 Children's BBC: Playdays. 4.40 Bananaman. 4.50 The All-New Popeye Show. 4.55 Bear Necessities. 5.20 Are You Being Served? Selection. 5.55 Listnd's Record Breakers. 6.00 Newsround. 6.10 Blue Peter. 6.55 Neighbours. 7.00 News. 7.30 Regional News Magazines. 8.00 Animal Watching with Anne Robinson. 8.30 Top of the Pops. 9.00 Keeping Up Appearances. 9.30 In Extreme Danger. 10.00 News. 10.30 FILM: Indecent Proposal. 12.50 The Stand-Up Show. 12.55 FILM: Critters IV. 2.25 Weather. 2.35 BBC News 24. 2.55 Ironside.

BBC 2

7.30am Energy at the Crossroads. 7.35 A Different Way of Learning. 8.00 Children's BBC: Haby Jeremy. 8.05 Teletubbies. 8.30 Yogi's Treasure Hunt. 8.55 Street. 9.20 Fenky Phantom. 9.45 Johnson and Friends. 9.55 Tales of the Tooth Fairies. 10.00 Haby Jeremy. 10.05 The Pirl Silvers Show. 10.20 Great Inventions of the 20th Century. 10.40 Children's BBC: Teletubbies. 11.40 FILM: Father of the Bride. 1.00 Wildlife on Two. 1.30 Working Lunch. 2.00 Children's BBC: Johnson and Friends. 2.10 The Arts and Crafts Hour. 2.40 Match of the Day Greats. 3.40 News; Regional News and Weather. 3.55 On Cue with Steve Davis. 4.25 News; Regional News and Weather. 4.30 Gardeners' World. 5.00 Change That. 5.25 Ready, Steady, Cook. 5.55 Lovel. 6.30 Today's the Day. 7.00 The Simpsons. 7.25 The Simpsons. 7.45 Robot Wars. 8.15 Secrets Chess. 8.30 The Romans in Britain. 9.00 House Detectives. 9.30 Gardening Neighbours. 10.00 The Fast Show. 10.30 Goodness Gracious Me. 11.00 Here I Go! Here for You. 11.30 Newsnight. 12.15 Stella Street. 12.50 John Cale. 1.50 The Verve Live. 2.50 FILM: Beware, My Lovely. 4.45 The Night Watchman. 5.55 Weather. 6.00 Learning Zone. 8.00 Close.

BBC Prime

Intelsat

7.00am World News. 7.30 World Weather. 7.50 Monty. 7.55 Noddy. 7.45 Blue Peter. 8.10 Grange Hill. 8.35 Hot Chefs. 8.45 Ready, Steady, Cook. 9.15 Style Challenge. 9.40 Change That. 10.05 Kilroy. 10.45 EastEnders. 11.15 Trouble At The Top. 12.05 Floyd on Britain and Ireland. 12.50 Ready, Steady, Cook. 1.00 Can't Cook, Won't Cook. 1.30 Change That. 1.55 Sitting Forecast. 2.00 Wildlife: A Day in the Life. 2.30 EastEnders. 3.00 Kilroy. 3.45 Style Challenge. 4.05 Sitting Forecast. 4.10 Hot Chefs. 4.20 Monty. 4.30 Noddy. 4.35 Blue Peter. 5.00 Grange Hill. 5.25 Wildlife: A Day in the Life. 6.00 World News. 6.25 World Weather. 6.30 Ready, Steady, Cook. 7.00 EastEnders. 7.30 Dalla Smith's Winter Collection. 8.00 The Bitter Empire Christmas Special. 8.30 Dad's Army. 9.00 Personally. 9.30 Meetings With Remarkable Trees. 10.00 World News. 10.25 World Weather. 10.30 Later With Jools Holland. 11.30 Punt and Dennis. 12.00 Alexei Sayle's Merry Go Round. 12.30 The Young Ones. 1.05 Dr Who: Image of the Cyberlad. 1.30 Hard Times. 2.15 The O Zone. 2.35 Shooting Stars. 4.10 The Fast Show. 4.55 One Foot in the Algarve. 5.50 Wildlife.

BBC World

Eutelsat

7.00am World News and Weather. 7.30 World Living: Top Gear. 8.00 World News and Weather. 8.30 Hard Talk. 9.00 World News and Weather. 9.30 World Focus: Kings of the Jungle. 10.00 World News and Weather. 10.30 Hard Talk. 11.00 World News and Weather. 11.30 World Living: The Net. 11.55 World City Guides. 12.00 The World Today. 12.50 World City Guides. 1.00 The World Today. 1.30 World Focus: Kings of the Jungle. 2.00 World News. 2.15 World Business Report and Weather. 2.30 The World Today. 3.00 World Living: Earth Report. 3.55 World City Guides. 4.00 World News and Weather. 4.30 Hard Talk. 5.00 World News and Weather. 5.30 World Focus: Kings of the Jungle. 6.00 World News and Weather. 6.30 World Living: Top Gear. 6.55 World City Guides. 7.00 The World Today. 8.30 Hard Talk. 9.00 World News and Weather. 9.30 World Focus: Correspondent. 9.55 World City Guides. 10.00 World News. 10.15 World Business Report and Weather. 10.30 World Living: Future Fantastic. 11.00 World News. 11.30 Europe Direct. 11.55 World City Guides. 12.00 World News and Weather. 12.30 World Business Report. 12.45 Asia Today. 12.55 World City Guides. 1.00 World News and Weather. 1.30 World Living: The Net. 2.00 News and Weather. 2.30 Asia Today. 2.45 World Business Report. 2.55 World City Guides. 3.00 World News and Weather. 3.30 USA Direct. 4.00 News and Weather. 4.30 Asia Today. 5.00 News and Weather. 5.30 USA Direct. 6.00 News. 6.30 World Focus: Kings of the Jungle. 6.55 World City Guides.

Radio 4

92.4-94.6 MHz 198 kHz (1514)

5.00am Today. 9.00 (LW) Yesterday in Parliament. 10.00 (LW) News 24. 10.00 Desert Island Discs. 10.45 (LW) An Act of Worship. 10.48 Serial: Dear Bill. 11.00 (LW) Request FM. 11.00 Woman's Hour. 12.00 Thirty-Somethings. 12.30 The Smart Couple. 1.00 News. 1.00 (LW) News Headlines. 1.01 (LW) Farming Today. 1.04 World Tonight. 1.04 (LW) Request FM. 1.57 Weather. 2.00 The World at One. 2.30 Screen Test. 3.00 The Archers. 3.15 Afternoon Play: Grandad. 4.00 Making History. 4.30 Citizen Smith. 4.45 Feedback. 5.00 Open Book. 5.30 The Message. 6.00 PM. 6.57 Weather. 7.00 News. 7.30 Inst Lec. 8.00 The Archers. 8.15 Front Row. 8.45 Under One Roof. 9.00 Any Questions? 9.45 Letter from America. 10.00 The Friday Play: The Last Explorer. 11.00 The World Tonight. 11.45 Book of the Week: Spokesmen. 12.00 Just a Minute. 12.30 The Men in Black. 12.50 (LW) Today in Parliament. 1.00 (LW) News FM. 1.00 News. 1.30 Late Book Review. 1.45 Shipping Forecast. 2.00 As It Was. Service. 5.30 World News. 5.35 Shipping Forecast. 5.40 Inshore Forecast. 5.45 Prayer for the Day. 5.57 Lesson Update. 6.05 Weather.

BBC World Service

BBC World Service can be received in England on MW 648 kHz (463m) and in Western Europe on LW 198 kHz (1515m)

5.00am News. 5.05 Off the Shelf: Play Back. 5.30 World Review. 6.00 News. 6.10 Praise For Thought. 6.15 Westway. 6.30 John Peel. 10.00 News. (Mon only) News in German. 10.05 World Business Report. 10.15 Early Version. 10.30 Speaking of English. 10.45 Sports Round-Up. 11.00 Newsdesk. 11.30 Assignment. 12.00 Newsdesk. 12.30 Focus on Faith. 1.00 News. 1.05 World Business Report. 1.15 Britain Today. 1.30 Wild Tales. 1.45 Sports Round-Up. 2.00 News. 2.05 Outlook. 2.30 Multifocal Alternative. 4.00 News; (Mon only) News in German. 4.05 Football Extra. 4.15 To Be Confirmed. 4.30 Science in Action. 5.00 News. 5.15 On Your Behalf. 5.30 Insight; (Mon only) News in German. 5.45 Britain Today. 6.00 Sports Today. 6.30 World Business Report. 6.45 Sports Round-Up. 7.00 Newsdesk. 7.30 Focus On Faith; (Mon only) News in German. 8.00 News Summary. 8.05 Outlook. 8.30 Pause For Thought. 8.35 Multifocal Alternative. 9.00 News/one. 10.00 News. 10.05 World Business Report. 10.15 Britain Today. 10.30 People and Politics. 11.00 Newsdesk. 11.30 Insight. 11.45 Sports Round-Up. 12.00 News. 12.05 Outlook. 12.30 Multifocal Alternative. 1.00 Newsdesk. 1.30 From the Weekend. 1.45 Britain Today. 2.00 Newsdesk. 2.30 To Be Confirmed. 2.45 Poems by Post. 3.00 Newsday. 3.30 People and Politics. 4.00 News. 4.05 World Business Report. 4.15 Sports Round-Up. 4.30 Science in Action. 5.00 Newsdesk. 5.30 Weekend.

Sky Premier

Astra

7.00 A Stranger to Love. 8.50 Kazaam. 10.20 Mission: Impossible. 1.50 A Stranger to Love. 3.30 We the Jury. 4.40 Pete 'n Dragon. 7.00 Kazaam. 8.30 Mission: Impossible. 11.00 Last Man Standing. 12.45 The Great White Hype. 2.15 The Perez Family. 4.10 Black Rain.

Sky MovieMax

Astra

7.00 Coyote Summer. 8.45 Sweet Revenge. 10.15 Suddenly. 12.00 Miracle on 34th Street. 3.00 Coyote Summer. 4.40 Sweet Revenge. 6.00 Suddenly. 8.00 Pitfighter. 9.30 UK Top 10. 10.00 Femmes Fatales: Whoopi Goldberg. 0.30 Movie Magic. In Living Colour. 10.00 High School High. 11.30 The Substitute. 1.05 Ferris Bueller's Day Off. 3.10 Ghoulies Go to College. 4.45 Summer School.

Sky Cinema

Astra

5.00 Monkey Business. 6.45 Cast a Giant Shadow. 9.00 Monsieur Beaucaire. 11.00 Days of Heaven. 12.30 The Seven-Ups. 2.20 Two Years Before the Mast. 4.00 The Directors: The Films of Robert Wise. 5.00 The Oracle Alien Murder Case.

Sky Sports

Astra

7.30 Futures in Sport. 8.00 Sports Centre. 8.15 WWF: Superstars. 9.15 Sports Centre. 9.30 Racing News. 10.00 Aerobics. 10.30 Football: Spanish Primera Liga. 12.30 Futbol Mundial. 1.00 Aerobics Oz Style. 1.30 Football League Review. 2.00 What a Weekend. 2.30 Futbol Mundial. 3.00 The Rugby Club. 3.30 Survival of the Fittest. 4.30 V-Max. 5.00 World Sport Special. 6.30 Times World Sport. 6.35 What a Weekend. 7.00 Sports Centre. 8.00 Figure Skating: World Team Skating Championship. 10.00 Rugby Union: Bermuda Masters. 11.00 Sports Centre. 12.00 Hold the Back Page. 1.00 Sports Centre. 2.00 WWF: Raw. 4.00 Hold the Back Page. 5.00 Rugby Union. 6.00 Sports Centre. 7.00 Close.

Sky Sports 3

Astra

12.30 Futures in Sport. 1.00 Trans World Sport. 2.00 Fielding: Tigh Lines. 3.00 Bobby Charlton's Football Scrapbook. 4.30 Futbol Mundial. 5.00 Football: Spanish Primera Liga. 7.00 Moto-Plus. 7.30 Wild Sports. 8.00 Football: Brentford v Cambridge – Live. 11.00 WWF: Raw. 1.00 Close.

Eurosport

Astra/Eutelsat

6.30 Showjumping: Olympia International Championships. 8.30 Olympics. 10.00 Bobsleigh: World Cup. 11.00 Alpine Skiing: Women's World Cup Downhill – Live. 12.30 Biathlon: World Cup. 1.45 Bobsleigh: World Cup. 3.00 Alpine Skiing: Women's World Cup Downhill. 4.15 Biathlon: World Cup. 5.30 Luge: Natural Track World Cup. 6.00 Football: Euro 2000 Qualifiers. 8.00 Karting: Finnish Indoor. 8.00 Motorcycling: Offroad Magazine. 10.00 Showjumping: Olympia International Championships. 11.00 Ten-Pin Bowling. 12.30 Extreme Sports. 1.30 Close.

Sky 1

Astra

8.00 The Simpsons. 8.30 Chris Evans. 9.30 Hollywood Squares. 10.00 Guilty! 11.00 Sally Jessy Raphael. 12.00 Oprah Winfrey. 1.00 Jenny Jones. 1.55 Special K Collection. 2.00 Days of Our Lives. 2.55 Special K Collection. 3.00 Sally Jessy Raphael. 3.55 Special K Collection. 4.00 Jenny Jones. 4.55 Special K Collection. 5.00 Guilty! 5.30 Star Trek: TNG 7.00 Married With Children. 7.30 Friends. 8.00 The Simpsons. 10.00 World's Scariest Police Chases 4. 11.00 Cops. 11.30 Cops. 12.00 Friends. 12.30 Star Trek: DS9. 1.30 Renegade. 2.30 Long Play.

National Geographic

Astra

8.00 Realm of the Alligator. 9.00 Tennant: Killer Wave 10.00 Friday Night Wild: Tigers of the Snow. 11.00 Friday Night Wild: Witch of Madagascar. 12.00 Friday Night Wild: Deal Hunter's Cave. 12.30 Friday Night Wild: Indira's Guitaw Horses. 1.00 Talking Pictures

UK Gold

Astra

8.00 Crossroads. 8.30 Neighbours. 8.55 EastEnders. 9.30 The Bill. 10.00 The Bill. 10.30 Middlemarch. 11.30 Angels. 12.00 Dallas. 12.55 Neighbours. 1.25 EastEnders. 2.00 Middlemarch. 3.00 Dallas. 3.55 The Bill. 4.25 The Bill. 4.55 EastEnders. 5.30 Angels. 6.00 All Creatures Great and Small. 7.00 Dad's Army. 8.00 May to December. 8.40 It Ain't Half Hot, Mum. 9.30 Dad's Army. 10.00 Men Behaving Badly. 10.40 Down Among the Big Boys. 11.30 The Bill. 1.00 The Bill. 1.35 Doctor Who. 2.25 Blake's Seven. 3.20 100 Years of Horror. 3.50 Shopping

Discovery

Astra/Intelsat

5.00 Reel World's Fishing World. 5.30 Walker's World. 6.00 Connections 2 by James Burke. 6.30 Jurassica. 7.00 Animal Doctor. 7.30 Alaska's Grizzlies. 8.30 Beyond 2000. 9.00 The Best of Discovery: Visions from Space. 10.00 Barefoot Bushmen. 11.00 America Exposed. 11.30 America Exposed. 12.00 Weapons of War. 1.00 Empire of the East. 2.00 Connections 2 by James Burke. 2.30 Ancient Warriors. 3.00 Close.

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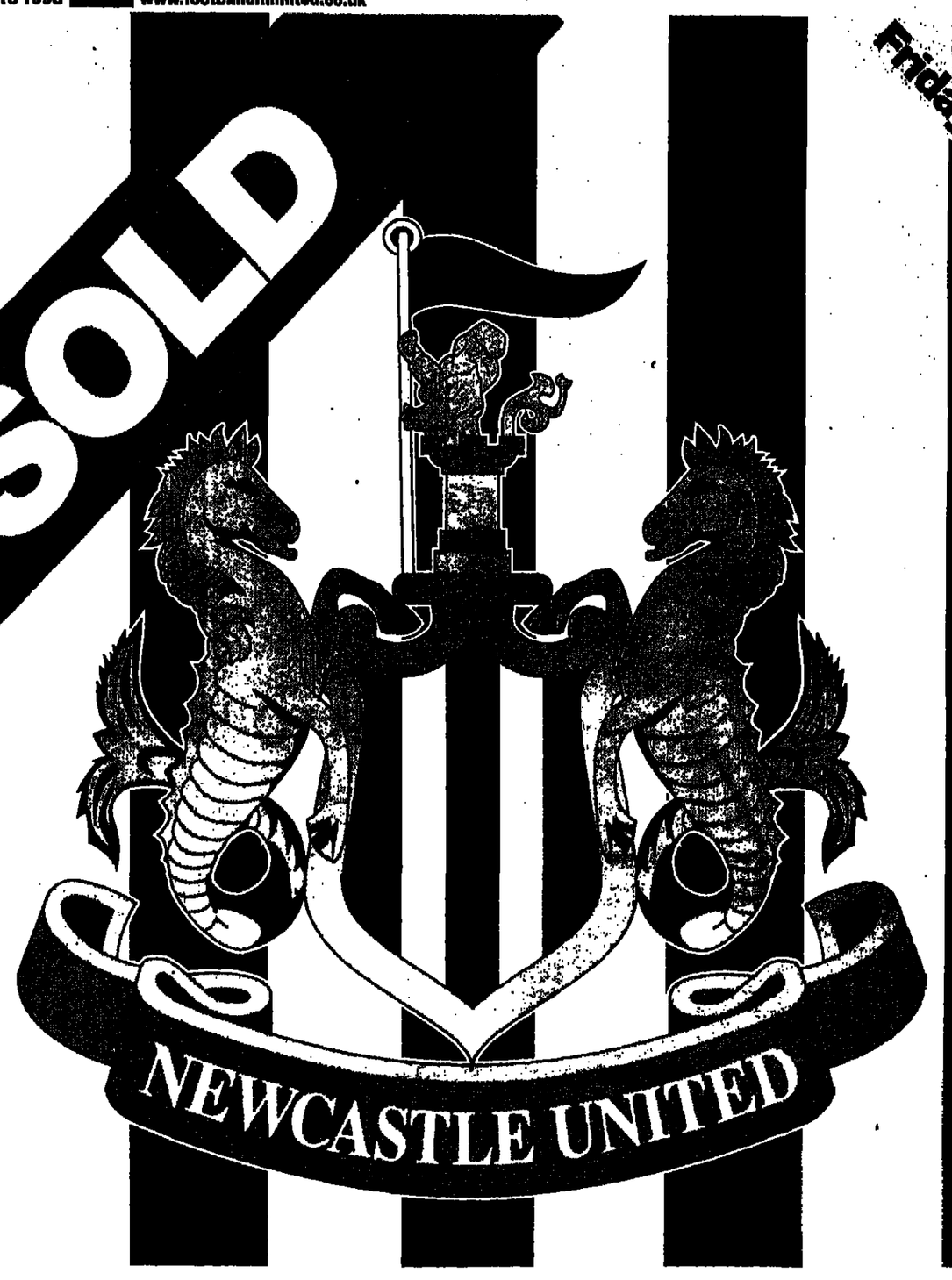
What price? Matthew Engel on cricket's betting crisis page 6

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INSIDE FridayReview



The selling of the Magpies

Cable company digs deep to take control of Newcastle

Julia Finch on how a Hampshire firm plans to make the North-East club a power in Europe

BRITAIN's third largest cable television company, NTL, is set to take over Newcastle United. The Hampshire-based concern yesterday announced that it had signed a deal to buy out the controlling stake owned by the controversial director Douglas Hall.

NTL, which owns the UK rights to the Eurosport TV channel, has invested £10 million to buy a six per cent stake in Newcastle from Cameron Hall Developments, the Hall family company. It has an option to buy the remaining 51 per cent of Hall's shareholding next year, but will await the outcome of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission probe into BSkyB's bid for Manchester United before taking up the option and launching a full £160 million bid.

If the purchase goes ahead it will mark the end of the Hall family's involvement in the club, which has taken the team from the bottom of the old Second Division to second place in the Premiership two years running and Europe. It will also hand the Hall family fortune by £90 million — 30 times the amount Cameron Hall paid for the club in 1991.

The 111.7p-a-share price agreed with NTL would leave the fans who bought shares in the club when it floated on the Stock Exchange last year nursing a loss of more than 23p per share. But yesterday Freddie Fletcher, Newcastle's chief executive and acting chairman, insisted it was a good price and a good deal. "This is good news for Newcastle United, its fans and its shareholders," he said. "If the best clubs are to compete with Manchester United, the Milan clubs and Barcelona, they need the strength of a company like NTL behind them."

NTL said it had more than £600 million in cash in the bank and has pledged £35 million over five years for a new youth development programme if the deal goes ahead.

The company refused to be drawn on how much cash it would make available for the manager Ruud Gullit to spend on new players, but said it was committed to "supporting the management to build a great team for the future".

The deal comes at a time when football clubs are being increasingly regarded as valuable media assets. In the wake of BSkyB's £630 million bid for Manchester United there has been mounting speculation about which clubs would be snapped up by television companies. International media giants Sony and Time Warner have also been tipped as possible club buyers. The media companies are all desperate to cash-in on the potential for pay-per-view football on the new digital TV channels and the legal moves which may mean clubs soon sell rights to their matches individually rather than collectively as part of the Premiership. However, no deals are likely to be finalised until the MMC rules on the Manchester United deal. The watchdog's conclusions are due by March 12 and NTL has 13 weeks after that date to buy out Newcastle.

NTL, which operates cable services under the CableTel brand, is listed on the New York Stock Exchange and run by an American chief executive, J Barclay Knapp. Yesterday Knapp — a New York Giants NFL fan — admitted he knew little about the team he could soon control. He has not seen Newcastle play but he said: "I know who the guys up front are — Shearer and Ferguson." He said NTL had looked at several football clubs, but it chose Newcastle United because of its "strong national fan base".

The club ran into controversy when it floated on the stock market in 1997. Directors quit, the share price sank and in March this year the club was engulfed in scandal when a Sunday newspaper exposed Douglas Hall and his codirector Freddy Shepherd boasting how they fleeced their own fans and making disparaging remarks about the women of Newcastle.

In the furore that followed, fans demonstrated against them and they were ousted from the board, only to return to the daily management of the club in July.

At the beginning of December they announced they were ready to use the weight of their combined 64 per cent stake to force their way back onto the board.

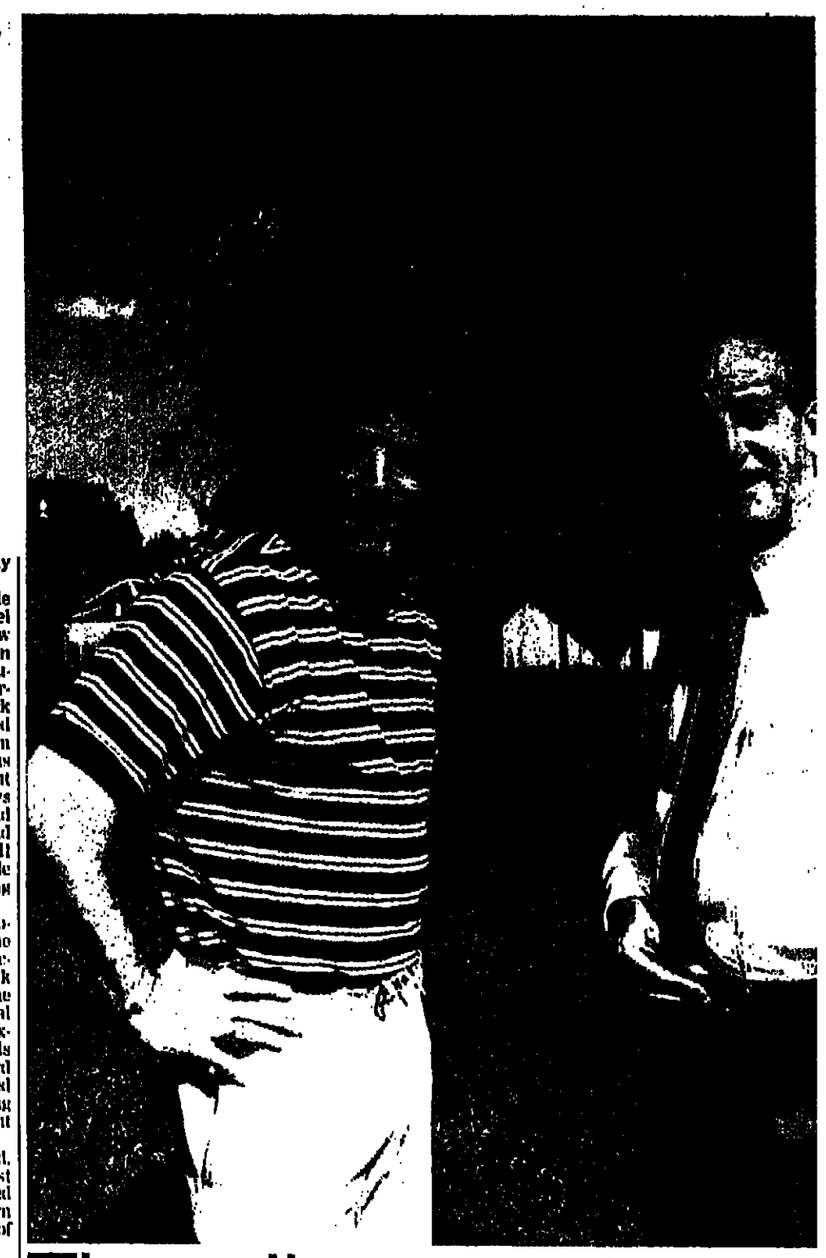
Their advisors said the men had a right to be on the board, but insisted Hall had no plans to unload his stake. The club chairman, Denis Cassidy, quit in protest at Hall and Shepherd's return, along with two other independent directors and the club's stockbrokers.

At the time of the flotation Cameron Hall had to agree not to sell any of its vast stake. That agreement expired on Wednesday and 24 hours later the deal with NTL was announced. Hall is expected to cut all ties with the club when the deal is finalised, although Shepherd is understood to be keen to continue to be involved.

Kevin Miles, chairman of the Newcastle United Independent Supporters Association, said: "I have had fans say to me that whoever takes us over, we are unlikely to get people who express as contemptuous an attitude to fans as the previous directors."

Who are NTL?

- NTL is a media and telecommunications company based in Farnborough, Hampshire.
- 11,000 employees — annual turnover of more than $1 billion.
- Operates in the UK, but the group's shares are quoted on American exchanges and it has offices in New York.
- The company delivers TV, radio, Internet, mobile and fixed telephone services to homes and businesses by several means including satellite, fibre-optics and conventional earth-bound TV and radio signals.
- Best known in Britain for its cable TV and telephone companies which have more than 1 million customers.
- Operations also trade under the Comcast, Diamond and ComTel names.
- With more than 1,000 towers in place, the group provides the transmission services used by ITV, Channels 4 and 5, and S4C.
- Nearly all Britain's independent radio stations use NTL transmitters.
- NTL was part of a group formed in 1981 with the founding of mobile phone company Cellular Communications Inc.
- CCI subsequently split some of its operations off, including a company OCOM which eventually became NTL.
- NTL is keen to move into digital and interactive TV, and plans to launch interactive TV in the spring.
- NTL has a 49 per cent stake in Virgin's Internet company, Virgin Net.



The roller-coaster ride from rich to richer for the Hall's family fortunes

Michael Walker on how £3 million turned into £90 million

ANYONE surprised at yesterday's news that Cameron Hall Developments, the business department of the Sir John Hall family tree, had begun selling off the silver had not been keeping their eye on the ball these past seven years.

This may be the beginning of the end of the Hall family's interest in Newcastle United but Sir John and his son Douglas had never disguised the fact that one day there would be an end, indeed they made that plain almost from the beginning.

From the start of their negotiations with the old board at St James' Park in 1991, when they invested the initial £3 million to take control, the Halls never shied away from the basic economic speculation of their latest enterprise.

By the time the club had been rescued financially and pointed upwards with Kevin Keegan installed as manager, Newcastle United Football Club was being described as the "profit centre" of Cameron Hall Developments and Hall senior's intended sporting empire. It was to include basket-

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- Capable of working with CGI, Perl and Javascript, Shockwave, Flash etc.
- Familiarity with graphic/image production packages and their capabilities.
- Familiar with using Website development and management tools such as Homesite, Cold Fusion, NetObjects etc.
- Exposure to e-commerce services

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For full details of the post, please send a post card quoting the job title, together with your name and address to:

National AIDS Trust, New City Cloisters, 196/196 Old Street, London EC1V 9FR

Closing date for applications: Thursday, 21 January 1999
Interviews: Friday, 29 January 1999.

NAT is striving towards equal opportunities and particularly encourages applications from women and black and minority ethnic communities. We also particularly welcome applications from people living with HIV.

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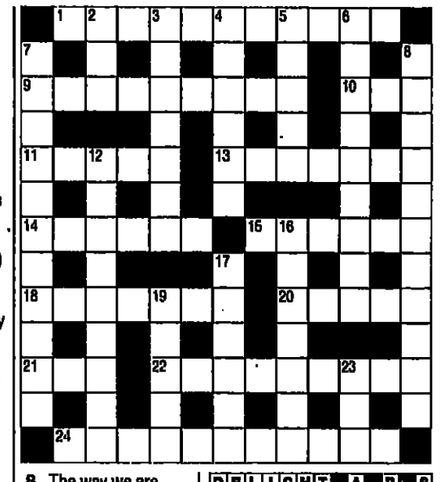
Quick Crossword No. 8934

Across

1 Coarse rude behaviour (11)
9 Preserve for breakfast (9)
10 Flightless bird (3)
11 Sailing boat (5)
13 Romance (anag) — Italian city famous for violins (7)
14 Hammer — for travel on snow (6)
15 River — female warrior (6)
18 New evidence may lead to one (7)
20 Piece of linen, paper, or rope (5)
21 Hole in needle (3)
22 One making derogatory comment (9)
24 Puffer (5,8)

Down

2 Pole with blade (3)
3 Selfish driver (4-3)
4 Posture (6)
5 Relative (5)
6 Rumpus (9)
7 Cover to conceal actions (11)
8 The way we are (5,6)
12 Usage — presentation (9)
16 Wild horse (7)
17 Happily unaware? (6)
19 Subcontinent (5)
23 Weight — speed (3)

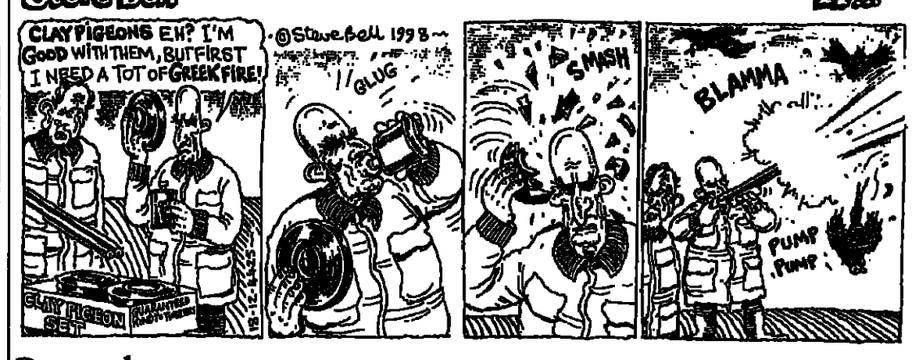


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clothing salesman and composer of — both mega-budget musicals, co- — which were staged at the party

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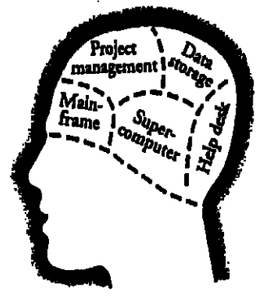
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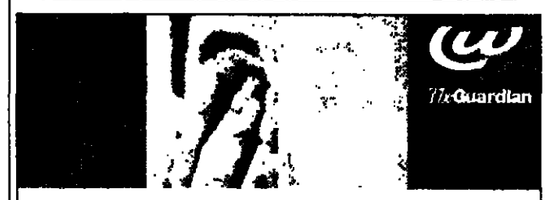
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The men who managed the Halls' shrewd investment . . . Kevin Keegan (left) with Sir John in May 1995 at the site of Newcastle's proposed academy of excellence at Woolsington Hall, Kenny Dalglish (above) embraced by the Toon Army in January 1997, and Ruud Gullit (below) starting to earn his black-and-white stripes on his August arrival at St James' Park



ball, athletics, ice hockey and rugby, and while it was never to materialise CHD nevertheless stands to receive a tidy dividend from the profit centre.

It was all so different seven years ago. Sir John, relaxing on a cruise liner as he sailed around the world with his wife Lady Mac, was handed a telegram from Douglas. The message was to the effect that unless he caught a flight to Tyneside quickly, the large percentage of Newcastle United they had bought was in danger of disappearing down a plug-hole marked 'debt'.

It says something of the Hall family fortune then that £3 million mattered enough for Sir John to return post haste to avoid Newcastle's liquidation. It is part of business legend that that scenario was only five days away.

The Halls had inherited a £6 million club debt and a team plummeting fast. Four days after a 5-2 defeat at Oxford on February 1 1992, Newcastle were 23rd in the old Second Division. So Hall sacked Ossie Ardiles and the same afternoon Keegan walked through the doors at Newcastle Breweries, the club's sponsors. It was the Halls' masterstroke.

An own goal by Leicester's Steve Walsh at Filbert Street on the final day of that season kept Newcastle up and with football being transformed by television money, Hall saw that Newcastle were saved from ruin and were now ready for "pump-priming".

Suddenly quality, experienced players such as Barry Venison and Paul Bracewell began to arrive and then in March, 1993 the club's ambition produced Andy Cole from Bristol City. Cole cost £1.75 million, the first million-pound player on Tyneside. Later Sir John was to call Cole "Lady Mac's buy", suggesting the newly christened Toon Army should express their gratitude to family money.

Team building was followed by stadium expansion and soon after Cole's goals had propelled Newcastle towards the Premiership, the Sir John Hall Stand began to rise at the Leazes End. The development of the Gallowgate followed and by 1998 there was a 36,000 all-seat stadium and enough fans to fill it three times over.

Newcastle were realising their potential. Off the field business was booming and Freddie Fletcher, the chief executive, continued to use his favourite word "maximise" about retail sales. But the ultimate maximising came in April 1997 when Newcastle floated on the stock exchange at a valuation of £193 million.

The float raised only £71 million and a proportion went on debt repayment. When Keegan was replaced by Kenny Dalglish, Newcastle were losing their appeal. It went completely in a brothel in Marbella this year when Douglas Hall and Freddy Shepherd, who had succeeded Sir John as chairman, ridiculed the fans and called Georgie women "dogs".

They also criticised Alan Shearer, for whom the club had broken the world transfer record in the summer of 1996. That was to be the high point of the board's ambition, although even now there is a £10 million bank loan from Barclays to increase St James' capacity to 51,000 that has Ruud Gullit wondering aloud about priorities.

Gullit now knows how the Halls function, for as Sir John has said all along: "We do treat anything we put in now as an investment. We expect a return on that investment because anyone who comes in from the private sector and just treats football as a whim will find that football not only damages your wealth." Unless your name is Douglas Hall.

> They never shied from the basic economic speculation of their enterprise

Up front



Niall Quinn

Boxing Day's nagging thoughts

IT WAS with no great pleasure that Sunderland's players picked up the season's fixture list last summer. After looking for the teams we were to play on the first and last days, the next date to focus on was Boxing Day: who and, more important, where?

This information dictates the domestic bliss or otherwise of Christmas, and so heads dropped when we discovered that Sunderland were away at Tranmere Rovers, a journey that begins at 4pm on Christmas Day and not forgetting training that morning.

So we have to endure another long, empty afternoon on the coach, and if there is one sure way footballers occupy such time it is by studying form. People who are aware of my interest in horse racing often ask me why footballers are so drawn to having a punt. I would love to offer some sociological explanation but my answer usually involves phrases such as "time on their hands", "money to spend" and "a quick thrill". I don't think I am too wide of the mark; certainly that is what happened when I was at Arsenal.

Now, however, as a small-time owner and part-time breeder, I have moved beyond the £2 win doubles in George Basham's in Southgate, and there was a time when I could tell you the chances of any given horse on good ground at Wincanton with an amateur jockey on board. It took a while but I realised that such anorak behaviour did not reflect the genuine love of horses I had had since being taken to the Leopardstown Christmas meeting by my father as a boy.

That magical feeling I shared with half of Dublin was being suffocated in smoky betting shops as I read the Racing Post backwards. I had to wise up I had to mature. So I got drunk at a sparse reward were many in Dublin after the Ireland World Cup, and when I woke up the next morning I had to find the courage to ring my wife and tell her that I'd bought a horse the night before.

It wasn't my fault, it was the drink talking. The trouble was that sitting beside me was the great Irish trainer Jim Bolger and the drink persuaded him to buy for me one of the yearlings he had in training. He told me that I'm bad at this.

Le Bilecheur made two, Cois Na Tine – By the Hearth of the Fine in Gaelic – was a lot more. Bought as a foal for 10,000 guineas at Tattersalls the Ireland Sales ring, Doncaster's Arcadia Stallions, I was fin I bring myself in winning enclosures, about two feet taller than everyone else, and I had never had a feeling like it. For the first time I understood what it must be like to have the passion of a true Sunderland fan and how they feel when Sunderland win. Not long after I discovered how they feel when we lose.

I had scored in World Cup finals in front of television millions, yet even within that joy there was an element of control; after all that was what I was there to do. The fans, though, had no such control, they were completely dependent on the players and that helplessness is what a racehorse owner experiences once the starting stall is opened. It is an incredible, addictive sensation.

Since Cois Na Tine's success, I have become more deeply involved in racing and now many of our family friends come from within the industry. As such, my concern is greater for losers off the track at the moment, because I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that horse racing is approaching crisis.

As someone who has been to most of the major yearling sales over the past few months, I have seen the dire financial situation with my own eyes. I have also heard alarming tales of how breeders have reached the stage where they have become almost completely reliant on foreign buyers, and from unlikely racing countries such as Turkey.

OWNERS in Britain are saying it has never been so bad and their anger is directed at the High Street bookmakers. The prize money on offer at the low key meetings that form the vast majority of the racing calender is simply not enough to make owning horses a viable option

The question, however, has to be asked: is the poorly attended provincial midweek meeting simply there to keep the High Street bookies' profits booming? Anyone worried about racing's future has yes to answer in the negative.

Courses such as my local one at Sedgefield suffer because of low my interest in at, many due fixtures. A solution might be for such tracks to stage attractive mini festivals, as they do in places such as Toulouse and Ireland's Naas. Where costly betterment money is to be more competitively paid racing buzz

That would keep the game vibrant, although these days we see the maverick racehat Rupert Boeing by will take the reins to spend Jem with Englishmen, and be the one

Football

McGrath wants more influence for black players

THE former Republic of Ireland international Paul McGrath has called for more black players to be given opportunities in the higher reaches of the game.

McGrath, who had a distinguished career with Manchester United and Aston Villa and was capped 83 times by the Republic, believes if racism in football is be conquered then the presence of black players on the pitch needs to be mirrored off it.

"There are so many black players in the game today, including those I have played with, who are well qualified to use their knowledge of the game in coaching," he said.

"If they could infiltrate the top jobs then it would be a lot easier to put across the point about racism creeping back into football. The game needs black people at the top level to provide a better insight and stamp out the problem.

"It just needs a strong-minded chairman to step forward and say, 'Why not?' Chairmen need to understand that there shouldn't be a monopoly over who gets a job."

Meanwhile the opportunity for a fresh start at the FA, following the resignation of Graham Kelly as chief executive, could open the door for a greater representation for ethnic minorities at Lancaster Gate.

At present, not a single member of the 91-man FA Council is black, while at grassroots level – within county FAs and local executive committees – it is believed that only one member is black.

Kick It Out, the campaign to rid football of racism, believes black and Asian people would benefit if there was a voice within the decision-making nexus of the game to speak on their behalf.

The national campaign co-ordinator Piara Power said: "We have been raising our concerns for some time at the lack of a black face within the council and further down at grassroots and county FA level.

"These issues have been ongoing for some time and we will continue to engage in dialogue with the FA if changes are made and once the dust settles."

Stevenage have sacked their manager Paul Fairclough, even though they are in the top three of the Conference.

Under Fairclough, Stevenage won the Conference title in the 1995-96 season – they were not promoted to the League as their ground did not reach the required standard – and took Newcastle to a fourth-round replay in last season's FA Cup.

Stevenage have offered Fairclough an alternative position of director of football and he will wait until Monday before deciding whether to accept the new role.

Reid close to striking new Sunderland deal

SUNDERLAND'S chairman Bob Murray said yesterday that Peter Reid was close to signing a new 2½-year contract, *writes Michael Walker*.

With the Wearsiders 10 points clear at the top of the First Division, Murray is aware that Reid is "on the priority list at a lot of clubs".

Murray said: "It's an administration thing. It's about dotting the Is and crossing the Ts. We've been talking about a 2½-year contract but we know Peter is desperate to stay here. He is the most important person at the club, he has a great affinity with the region and I know that he will need financial support. We will give it to him."

Murray also announced that should Sunderland be promoted work on expanding the Stadium of Light to 48,000 will begin immediately and that £5½ million has been earmarked for the project.

David Platt yesterday completed his transition from spurned YTS trainee to manager of one of the most famous clubs in the world.

The former England skipper, who started his career at Crewe after being told by the then Manchester United boss Ron Atkinson he was not good enough, has signed a 2½-year contract with Sampdoria and now prepares his new charges for the visit of AC Milan on Sunday.

The former Salnsbury's director Bob Cooper has been named as the new chairman of Norwich City. Cooper replaces Barry Lockwood, who stepped down and will remain as a director.

Brian Lewis, a member of the Colchester side who inflicted a major FA Cup defeat on Don Revie's Leeds at Layer Road in 1971, has died of cancer at the age of 55. Lewis played more than 400 games between 1961 and 1975.



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Chris Hawkins expects Martin Pipe's gelding to make a winning chasing debut at Uttoxeter

Boxer looks unsinkable

A MUNDANE Uttoxeter card is enlivened this afternoon by the first appearance over fences of Unsinkable Boxer, the novice already quoted as short as 14-1 for the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

Martin Pipe has chosen the Lefley's Hog Roast Chase, over two and a half miles, for Unsinkable Boxer, who was unbeaten in five races over hurdles last season and wound up his campaign with contemptuous victories at the Cheltenham Festival and Aintree.

Seldom can such an apparently competitive event as the 24-runner Gold Card Final Handicap Hurdle, over three and a quarter miles, at Cheltenham have been won with such ease and the form book comment "led on bit two out, soon sauntered clear" paints a vivid picture of that stunning performance.

It may be jumping the gun to talk about this horse as a Gold Cup contender in his first season as a chaser, but Unsinkable Boxer does not have time on his side. A bumper winner in Ireland in October 1994, he missed the whole of the 1995-96 season and will be 10 years-old on January 1.

Taken on by only three inexperienced opponents this afternoon, Unsinkable Boxer (1.30) will be virtually unbeatable, being expected to win with his head in his chest, but it should be remembered that fences are a different proposition to hurdles.

Tony McCoy, who rides Unsinkable Boxer, seems to have excellent prospects of landing the first three races on the Uttoxeter card starting with Ardfinnan (12.30) in the first division of the EBF National Hunt Novice Hurdle.

Ardfinnan, trained by Jenny Pitman, was a warm favourite to win at Aintree last month but was a shade disappointing when second to Sikander Azam. The form of the race was boosted by success for the fourth, Cash For Questions, at Catterick yesterday, however, and I believe Ardfinnan is worth another chance. McCoy then teams up with Gallant Taffy (1.00) who looks the pick of the novice chase.



Showing the way . . . Name Of Our Father leads the field at Towcester yesterday GEORGE SHELTON

Racing results

EXETER

1.10 (2m 7f Hdle): 1, SPIRIT LEVEL, Mr P Flynn (33-1); 2, Divine Chance (25-1); 3, Top Skipper (7-1). 4, The Flying Doctor (6-1) 3 ½l Dorothy Paker. 17 ran. 7, 7, 16 (J Payne) Tote: £33.60, £4.80, £4.30, £1.60, £3.00 Dual F: £91.90. CSF: £630.56 Trifecta: £5,749.24

1.40 (2m 3f 110yds Hdle): 1, SKIPCARL, J Culloty (11-10 fav), 2, Kentford Thea (8-1), 3, Bora Bora (3-1) 11 ran. 8, 18 (Miss H Knight) Tote: £2.10, £1.10, £3.00, £1.30 Dual F: £17.60 CSF: £11.39.

2.10 (2m 3f Chs): 1, ROYAL BAROK, R Dunwoody (4-1), 2, Kazan Duke (9-2); 3, Flaked Oats (7-2) 3 ½l Lay Scotby. 10 ran 3, ½ (P Bowen) Tote: £3.80, £1.70, £1.90, £2.20 Dual F: £11.70. Trifecta: £39.30 CSF: £21.79 Tricast: £84.77

2.40 (2m 3f Ch): 1, INDIAN MISS, C Maude (12-1), 2, Kannabella (7-2), 3, Madam Muck (13 8 fav). 9 ran. 8, 13 (M Pipe) Tote: £13.00, £2.70, £1.10, £1.50 Dual F: £16.10 CSF: £43.52

3.10 (2m 1f 110yds Hdle): 1, LIZZYS FIRST, D Salter (7-2), 2, Boater (11-2), 3, Country Ris (6-1). 5-2 fav Elegant des Cosses. 11 ran. 8, 3¾ (D Millman) Tote: £5.80, £1.60, £1.70, £2.40 Dual F: £18.40 CSF: £21.81 Tricast: £149.50

3.40 (2m 1f 110yds Hdle): 1, WORLD EXPRESS, D Salter (3-1); 2, Harry (13-8), 3, Takeamemo (11-1). 6-4 fav Out Ranking. 7 ran. 18, 8 (B Millman) Tote: £4.20, £1.30, £1.70 Dual F: £6.00 CSF: £8.26.

JACKPOT: Not won. Pool of £13,341.67 carried forward to Uttoxeter today

PLACEPOT: £30.80.

QUADPOT: £8.10.

CATTERICK

12.20 (2m 3f Hdle): 1, CASH FOR QUESTIONS, E Callaghan (11-2), 2, Meldrum Park (5-1); 3, Allarlouck (100-1) 4-1 fav Springhold Scally. 19 ran. 5, 3½ (H Fahey) Tote: £9.80, £1.70, £1.60, £20.30 Dual F: £12.30. CSF: £26.14.

12.50 (2m 3f Ch): 1, PHARRIRO, I Jardine (3-1); 2, Castletown Count (4-1 fav); 3, Made of Steel (12-1). 13 ran. 15, 23 (F Murphy) Tote: £3.00, £1.60, £1.40, £2.30 Dual F: £6.70. CSF: £9.77.

1.20 (2m 1f 110yds Hdle): 1, TILTY, Barry Lyons (20-1); 2, The Next Waltz (11-2 Fav); 3, Vilprano (7-1); 4, Cash Box (20-1). 17 ran. 3¾, 4, nk (A Strauton) Tote: £22.80; £3.90, £2.80, £2.00, £1.90. Dual F: £127.70. CSF: £121.72. Tricast: £812.69

1.50 (3m 1f 110yds Chs): 1, HAO'S WAY, A Dobbin (10-1); 2, Tells Clock (6-1), 3, Gale Force (11-4). 5-2 fav Purovelue. 6 ran. 16, 8, (J Howard Johnson) Tote: £3.80; £3.20, £4.10,. Dual F: £17.00. CSF: £66.80.

2.20 (2m Hdle): 1, CUMBRIAN MAESTRO, L Wyer (7-2); 2, Kalpete (7-1), 3, Eastern Prospect (7-1). 3-1 fav Kierchem. 11 ran. Nk, 2½ (T Easterby) Tote: £4.30, £1.90, £2.40, £1.80. Dual F: £14.00. CSF: £29.36. Tricast: £140.30.

2.50 (2m Chs): 1, DAMZA, Richard Guest (11-2), 2, Minster Glory (5-2); 3, Hollinson (7-1) 3-1 fav Count Karmuski. 7 ran 2¾, hd (N Mosson) Tote: £3.50; £5.00, £1.20. Dual F: £18.10. CSF: £27.07.

3.20 (2m Flats): 1, NATIVE AFFAIR, W Dowling (11-8 fav); 2, Open Fairway (16-1), 3, Kilcraggan (5-1). 16 ran. 12, 5, (L Lungo) Tote: £2.90; £1.40, £2.20, £2.10. Dual F: £25.00. CSF: £28.39.

PLACEPOT: £752.70.

QUADPOT: £108.70

TOWCESTER

12.30 (2m Hdle): 1, AMILLIONMEMORIES, E Dyno (15-2); 2, Summer Flower (9-2); 3, Round Robin (9-2). 5-2 fav Be Brave. 10 ran. 15, 16 (Mrs Barbara Waring) Tote: £9.50, £2.00, £1.80, £1.10. Dual F: £22.70 CSF: £37.08 Tricast: £167.87.

1.00 (3m 6f Ch): 1, EDMOND, R Johnson (4-9 fav); 2, Spring Beket (8-1); 3, Danger Flyne (9-4) 7 ran. 8, 1¾ (H Daly) Tote: £1.60, £1.10, £2.20. Dual F: £4.00. CSF: £6.88

1.30 (2m 6f Hdle): 1, DIDDY RYDER, Mr J Crowley (11-10 fav); 2, Not Forgotten (100-30); 3, Castle Secret (3-1). 5 ran. 7, 27. (Mrs S Smith) Tote: £2.00. £1.20, £1.80. Dual F: £1.90 CSF: £4.90.

2.00 (3m 1f Ch): 1, SPARKLING CONE, Mr J Williamson (7-2); 2, Majora Legacy (3-1 fav); 3, Name Of Our Father (7-2). 7 ran. 7, dist (Miss Venetia Williams) Tote: £4.70, £2.20, £2.10. Dual F: £7.40. CSF: £14.13.

2.30 (2m Hdle): 1, RICARDO, D Leahy (7-1); 2, Wilmott's Fancy (6-4 fav); 3, Nilhak (5-2). 13 ran. 1¾, 2¼ (Mrs J Pitman) Tote: £6.40, £1.80, £1.60, £1.60 Dual F: £22.70. CSF: £24.30. NR: Brynkir

3.00 (2m 110yds Chs): 1, BIRRA BAY, J A McCarthy (13-2); 2, Buckland Lad (6-4 fav); 3, Mr Seagle (2-1) 4 ran. 8, 20. (G Sherwood) Tote: £5.80. Dual F: £6.40. CSF: £14.15

3.30 (2m Flats): 1, NO QUARTER (N Williamson) (2-1), 2, Needwood Lion (12-1); 3, Ikenilyme (5-11 fav). 11 ran. 3½, 3½, (K Appleby. T Christie (O2). 2 ran. 2, 1½, (J Dawes; K Druce; N O'Hara; J Cooper; M Allen; M Gogel (US); M Jonzon (Swe); M Cain; P Bow; R White. Also 7 B O Walton (GB).

Basketball

EUROLEAGUE: Group D: KK Zadar 70 Alba Berlin 82; Ulkaspor 49 Kinder Bologna 60. Group E: Samara 84 PAOK Salonika 77.

Equestrianism

OLYMPIA INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS (London): Potplan Family Pair Relay (Rnds 1, Henko (P Funnell)/Comex (W Funnell) 70.17sec; 2, Hildelton Lad (P Barker)/Townhead Karibund (J Andrews) 72.39; 3, Virtual Village Heyman (J Whitaker)/Livingston II (L Whitaker) 76.38. 4, Gold Horizon (A Lewis)/Incora (M Lipman) 78.45; 5, Findon Mitrofille (K Jackaman)/ Harlem (G Williams) 76.48; 6, Dun Riddle (J Read-Stephenson)/EMR Zippo (B Tobin) 77.24. P & O Bronte Christmas Blakeen 1, Virtual Village Grantwich (J Whitaker, GB) 0 faults 47.40sec, 2, Birn II (L. McNaught, Switz) 0 48.11; 3, Virtual Village Hilton (M Whitaker, GB) 0 48.59. 4, Lord Plena For Pleasure (L Heberg, Ger) 0 53.15; 5, Candy Floss (P Le Jeune, Bel) 0 51.53, 6, Landdame FRH (F Stoolbaek, Ger) 0 53.30.

Hockey

ASIAN GAMES (Bangkok): Men: Semi-finales South Korea (holders) 3 Pakistan 2; India 3 Japan 1.

Ice Hockey

NHLs: Detroit 6 Boston 3, Florida 4 Pittsburgh 1; New Jersey 8 NY Rangers 3; Toronto 5 Phoenix 2; Anaheim 6 Nashville 1.

Swimming

BRITISH SHORT COURSE CHAMPIONSHIPS (Glasgow): Men: 200m freestyles 1, A Clayton (Bath Univ) 1min 47.46sec. 50m breaststroke: 1, D Mew (Bath University) 27.82. 50m backstroke: 1, S Parry (Liverpool) 24.98. 400m individual medley: 1, D Wigg (Newcastle) 4.17.41. 4x100m freestyle relays 1. Bath Univ 3.16.65. Women: 50m breaststroke: 1, J King (Nash Univ) 32.54sec. 200m butterfly: 1, M Pedder (Portsmouth) 2.11.62. 400m individual medleys: 1, H Fox (Portsmouth) 4.46.18. 4x200m freestyle relays: Nova conduction 8.05.75.

Snooker

IRISH OPEN (Dublin): Quarter-finals: M Williams (Wales) bt K Doherty (Ire) 5-1; T Drago (Malta) bt S Hendry (Scot) 5-4

Sport in brief

Snooker

Tony Drago came from 4-2 down to register the second victory of his career against Stephen Hendry in the semi-finals of the Irish Open in Dublin yesterday, *writes Clive Everton*. Drago, who beat Hendry for the first time at the German Masters last week after losing his first 12 matches against the former world champion, took the next three frames to win 5-4.

The Welsh left-hander Mark Williams ended Irish interest in the event by beating Ken Doherty 5-1 in 79 minutes with a barrage of breaks, including one of 133.

Chess

The world champion Garry Kasparov swept the board in two simultaneous matches at the Berkeley Hotel in London yesterday. He defeated all 24 opponents in a charity contest and then outplayed 12 rivals in Internet games, *writes Leonard Barden*.

Kasparov's Wireplay opponents included a junior team of Thomas Readle, 12, Gawain Jones, 11, Murugan Thiruchelvam, 10, and David Howell, eight, who have been successful in recent adult tournaments.

Ice Hockey

The Superleague has reduced the ban it imposed on Cardiff's Nicky Chinn for slashing a London Knights player in a game on December 1 from 10 matches to two, but he will still have to pay £250 fine he was given. Nottingham's Darcy Loewen had a three-game ban and £250 fine quashed at yesterday's disciplinary hearing. Both players had the £1,000 deposits required for lodging an appeal returned.

Hockey

South Korea and India will contest tomorrow's final at the Asian Games in Bangkok, with the winners qualifying for the Sydney Olympics in 2000. In the semi-finals the Koreans beat Pakistan 3-2 and India defeated Japan 8-1, *writes Pat Rowley*.

England's women have recalled Anna Bennett and Lucy Cope to their 1999 squad.

ENGLAND: Bennett (Slough), Benson (Olton), Blacka, Bowden (both Leicester), Brown (Slough), Clewlow (Canterbury), Cope, Copeland (Slough), Cullen (Hightown), Simpson (Canterbury), Greenham (Slough), Marston-Smith (Clifton), Miller (Leicester), Moore (Olton), Mould (Leicester), Newcombe (Clifton), Nicholson (Slough), Reid (Highown), Roberts (Chelmsford), Rose (Unatt), Sixsmith (Sutton), Smith (Slough), Wright (Olton).

Results

Golf

CODLUM CLASSIC (Brisbane): Leading first-round scores (Aus unless stated): 66 C Spence. 68 A Crawford; P Moloney. 69 D Partridge; C Smedley, P McWhinney, J Appleby, T Christie (NZ). 70 G Coles; J Dawes; K Druce; N O'Hara; J Cooper; M Allen; M Gogel (US); M Jonzon (Swe); M Cain; P Bow; R White. Also: 72 B O Walton (GB).

Fixtures

Football

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: Second Division: Bristol Rvrs v Macclesfield (7.45); Colchester v Blackpool (7.45). Third Division: Brentford v Cambridge Utd (7.45); Rotherham v Chester (7.45); Shrewsbury v Torquay (7.45).

LEAGUE OF WALES: Conwy v Bangor City (7.30).

IRISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Portadown v Linfield (7.30).

FAI NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier Division: St Patricks Ath v Finn Harps (7.45); Shamrock Rvrs v Waterford (7.45).

Rugby League

INTERNATIONAL: England Students v France Students (7.30, New Riverside, London).

Rugby League

Huddersfield make the Wright move

Andy Wilson

HUDDERSFIELD Giants yesterday gave the injury-plagued former England stand-off Nigel Wright a two-year contract.

Earlier this year the 25-year-old was released by Wigan, after a series of injuries to his ankle, knee and shoulder. Wright recently obtained medical clearance and demanded compensation from Wigan before moving. A figure has now been agreed.

"Nigel will be a huge asset to the side," said the Huddersfield coach Malcolm Reilly. Wright is Huddersfield's fifth close-season signing so far.

The Super League newcomers Gateshead Thunder are poised to announce two more Australian signings — Brett Green, formerly of the Western Reds and Brisbane Broncos, and Brett Grogan from Newcastle.

Bradford Bulls have released Andy Hodgson and the former Great Britain forward Sonny Nickle.

The former Widnes and Bradford Bulls forward Andy Ireland has signed a new two-year contract with Hull Sharks.

The First Division's Hunslet Hawks have appointed the former Leeds United FC chairman, Bill Fotherby, as their new managing director.

Cone makes light of weight

NORMAN Williamson completed a near 14-1 double on Venetia Williams's Sparkling Cone in the 48's Ladbrokes Mistletoe Handicap Chase and Kim Bailey's No Quarter in the Ivy Standard Open National Hunt Flat Race at Towcester yesterday.

Sparkling Cone produced a fine weight-carrying performance to score on his seasonal reappearance, making light of 11st 13lb.

Williamson was able to ease Sparkling Cone down to a trot over the line and still had seven lengths in hand of the favourite Majors Legacy.

Sparkling Cone's owner-breeder Margaret Horton said: "We were a bit worried about the weight but he's done it very well. Norman said he jumped very well and he was very pleased with him."

No Quarter, who beat Needwood Lion by three and a half lengths, had proved a real handful since Bailey bought him at the Fairyhouse Sales in Ireland last year.

Southwell all-weather card

	CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
11.50	Magical Shot	Magical Shot
12.20	Rambo Waltzer (nap)	Rambo Waltzer
12.50	Time Out	Le Sauvage
1.20	Suafinch	Suafinch
1.50	Lady Goldjob	Waln Mountain
2.20	Rajmata	Rajmata
2.50	Mister Raider	Elton Ledger
3.20	Far Cry	Far Cry

All-weather, left-handed track of 10f with 3f run-in. Separate spur provides straight 5f.
Going: Standard. ★ Denotes blinkers. ● Top form rating.
Draw: High numbers favoured in 5f races.
Seven day winners: None.
Blinkered first time: 12.20 Impulsive Decision. Visored: 12.20 Salty Behaviour; 1.20 Killarney Jazz.

11.50 AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES (Div I) 1m 3f £2,211 (9 declared)

[illegible]

12.20 CLAIMING STAKES (Div I) 1m £2,348 (16 declared)

[illegible]

12.50 AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES (Div 2) 1m 3f £2,211 (8 declared)

[illegible]

1.20 CLAIMING STAKES (Div 2) 1m £2,337 (16 declared)

[illegible]

1.50 MAIDEN STAKES 2YO 7f £2,827 (16 declared)

[illegible]

2.20 NURSERY HANDICAP 2YO 5f £2,815 (10 declared)

[illegible]

2.50 SOLOMON ISLANDS SELLING STAKES 6f £1,977 (16 declared)

[illegible]

3.20 AMATEUR RIDERS' HANDICAP 1m 4f £1,977 (13 declared)

[illegible]

Uttoxeter with guide to the form

	CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
12.30	Ardfinnan	Storm Of Gold
1.00	Gallant Taffy	Raqib
1.30	Unsinkable Boxer	—
2.00	Muldar	Muldar
2.30	Dirty Dozen	Coxwell Cossack
3.00	Ashwell Boy	Nearly An Eye (nap)
3.30	Steel Blade	—

Left-handed oval track of 1¼m with 170yds run-in. Easy bends and only a few undulations.
Going: Good to soft, soft in places. ★ Denotes blinkers. ● Top form rating.
Seven day winners: None.
Blinkered first time: None. Visored: 12.30 Anugraha.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since last outing. F. Flat.

12.30 NOVICE HURDLE (Div I) 2m 4f 110yds £2,337 (13 declared)

[illegible]

1.00 GUINNESS NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE 3m £3,243 (16 declared)

[illegible]

1.30 LEFLEY'S HOG ROAST NOVICE CHASE 2m 4f £3,599 (4 declared)

[illegible]

2.00 49'S HOOPS LAURENT PERRIER HANDICAP HURDLE (SHOWCASE RACE) 2m £6,225 (7 declared)

[illegible]

2.30 NOVICE HURDLE (Div 2) 2m 4f 110yds £2,337 (13 declared)

[illegible]

3.00 ST MODWEN HANDICAP CHASE 2m £4,674 (5 declared)

[illegible]

3.30 WEATHERBYS STARS OF TOMORROW OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT 2m £1,721 (10 declared)

[illegible]

Lingfield runners and riders

	CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
12.35	Tickerty's Gift (nb)	Farrers
1.10	Marlborough	Marlborough
1.40	Handy Lass	Heart (nb)
2.10	Buckside	—
2.40	Out'N'About	
3.10	Barhale Boy	Inner Light
3.40	Jodi	Barhale Boy

Left-handed circuit of 1m5f with 200yds run in. Triangular in shape, with tight downhill turn into home straight.
Going: Soft, heavy in places. ★ Denotes blinkers. ● Top form rating.
Seven day winners: None.
Blinkered first time: 2.40 Yazahed. Visored: None.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since last outing. F. Flat.

12.35 CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 110yds £2,184 (6 declared)

[illegible]

1.10 HAG YIDI NOVICE CHASE 3m £3,002 (7 declared)

[illegible]

1.40 H.B.L.B. CHRISTMAS MARES' ONLY HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 3f 110yds £3,842 (4 declared)

[illegible]

2.10 E.B.F. NOVICE HURDLE 2m 110yds £2,306 (7 declared)

[illegible]

2.40 PLUM PUDDING JUVENILE NOVICE HURDLE 3YO 2m 110yds £2,549 (10 declared)

[illegible]

3.10 NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE 2m £2,263 (5 declared)

[illegible]

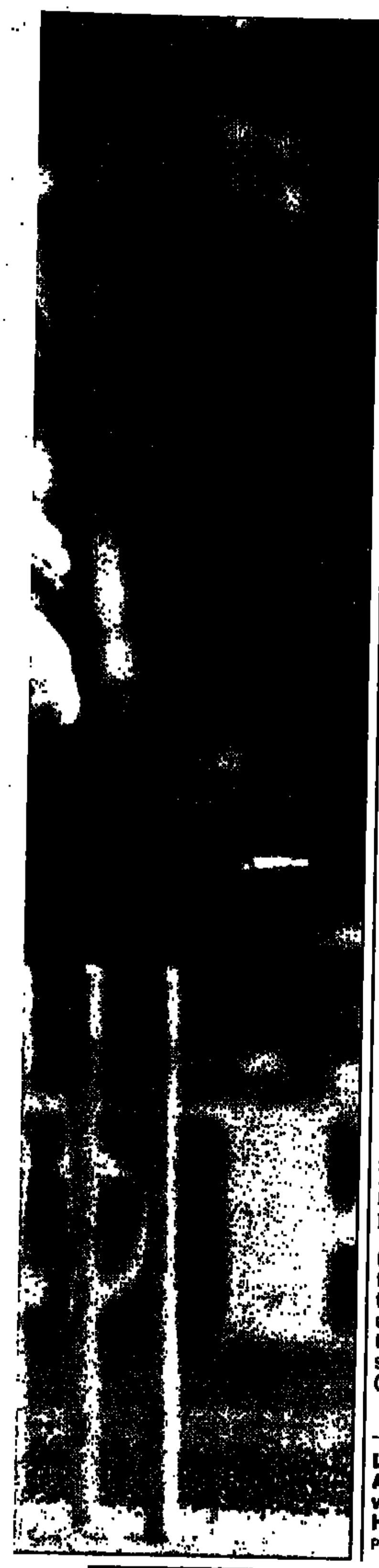
3.40 HOLLY & IVY MAIDEN OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT 2m 110yds £1,203 (4 declared)

[illegible]

KEEPING TRACK
09064 700 +

	COMMENTARY	RESULTS
UTTOXETER	141	151
LINGFIELD	142	152
SOUTHWELL	143	153
ALL COURSES COMMENTARY	09064 700 140	
ALL COURSES RESULTS	09064 700 150	

The Guardian INTERACTIVE



Cricket

Tour match: Australian Prime Minister's XI v England XI

England gain some relief from their Ashes misery

Mike Selvey fears for Alec Stewart's men despite yesterday's welcome victory

AFTER England had scrambled their way through the early part of the tour and escaped with the family silver in Brisbane, someone referred to the side as Alec Stewart's Invincibles. Earlier this week however, as the side plummeted to another defeat in an Ashes series, that was quickly amended to the Inevitables. As the record in dead rubbers and festival games suggests, England are pretty nifty at winning when it does not really matter and losing when it does.

Yesterday, at Manuka Oval in Canberra, they did it again, beating the Australian Prime Minister's Select XI by 19 runs. It was a pretty enough game in a tree-lined setting to match, although there were moments when an upset looked on the cards. Mark Butcher, Ben Hollioake, Graeme Hick and John Crawley all found themselves back in the pavilion inside seven overs with 26 on the board, and later Daniel Marsh, a four-square chunky chip off his dad Rod's block, caned 74 from 72 balls in a last-ditch pursuit of victory.

But England had the best of the pitch (trust Mark Taylor to lose the really important tosses) and recovered well enough to 225 for eight thanks to Stewart (34), Nasser Hussain (41) and Warren Hegg (47).

England then took early wickets to put the PM's team under pressure and generally kept things under control. Alan Mullally took the first two wickets without conceding a run, Angus Fraser and Dominic Cork bowled steadfastly and Hick cashed in at the finish.

A win is a win is a win, but for the most part it was a gentle sideshow from the main tour. Taylor himself had a bowl at the end of the England innings (actually it bordered on the patronising in order to make a game of it), and Santa Claus patrolled the boundary, bellowing either Merry Christmas or Aussie, Aussie, Aussie at any spectators who cared to listen.

It was all calm before the final storm, however. The side flew to Hobart earlier this morning, and tomorrow will face the Australian XI — effectively their second team — at Bellerive Oval, before travelling to Melbourne and Sydney for the final two back-to-back Tests over Christmas and New Year. The Ashes may have gone but this promises to be the toughest three weeks of the tour.

As Alan Border, one of the selectors, pointed out last week, all the Australian players could, if asked, drop straight into a Test and not be out of place. If the bowling is good rather than from the top drawer, then the batting is awesome, with three players in particular — Matthew Elliott, Greg Blewett and the captain of the side Darren Lehmann — keen to demonstrate how much on their toes those in the first XI have to remain.

Ricky Ponting's place is in jeopardy after three disappointing matches and one of those three — Lehmann probably but by no means certainly — could come in for Melbourne.

With the intensity of the forthcoming cricket, England of course cannot afford to play their best side (if indeed they are clear what that is any more). Certain players, Darren Gough and Mullally in particular, need the recovery period offered by the next week. Mark Ramprakash, too, has missed only yesterday's match all tour when he was nursing the flu bug that habitually plagues him, while Hussain has played every match except the first. But both are playing so well that neither would want to miss out continuing the good run. It is a tricky one, that.

Those who definitely need runs out of the match include Mike Atherton, Butcher, Stewart to an extent, and Crawley and Hick, one or both of whom has to play in Melbourne.

There is also a case for Hegg to continue keeping wicket, allowing Stewart respite. Any notion that Hegg should do the job in the Test and allow the captain to revert to the top of the order and concentrate on his batting and captaincy has to be wonky thinking: just for the record, batting at six in the second innings of the last Test, Stewart made an unbeaten 69, and that is the position in which he should end up.

Many Australians, not to mention Englishmen and sundry taxi drivers, are mystified why, after a successful debut in Perth, the protective layers were immediately wrapped around Alex Tudor, rather than allowing him his head at Adelaide. He is very much in the frame for Melbourne, however, and will play tomorrow, as no doubt will Fraser and Headley, who could also be competing with each other for a place.

It means that Cork's card would be marked and so, if Peter Such carries on, will be that of Robert Croft. There is a school of thought which says that Croft ought to have some cricket if he is to be considered for the Sydney Test, but Such came into the third Test at a moment's notice, not having bowled competitively for a month, and did rather well. Middle practice can be overrated.

Look back in anguish . . . Australia's Brad Hodge watches the bails fly as Ben Hollioake bowls him
PHOTOGRAPH: BEN CURTIS

Scoreboard

ENGLAND

M A Butcher c Richards b Harrity	4
*A J Stewart c Campbell b Creevey	34
B C Hollioake c Campbell b Nicholson	0
G A Hick c Katich b Nicholson	8
J P Crawley c Campbell b Harrity	0
N Hussain c Creevey b Marsh	41
†W K Hegg b Creevey	47
D G Cork c Katich b Harrity	22
R D B Croft not out	19
A R C Fraser not out	21
Extras (lb12, w15, nb2)	29
Total (for 8, 50 overs)	225

Fall of wickets: 8, 8, 21, 26, 85, 107, 160, 196.
Did not bat: A D Mullally.
Bowling: Harrity 10-0-46-3; Nicholson 9-0-37-2; Creevey 9-0-32-2; Hansen 6-0-27-0; Marsh 10-0-33-1; Symonds 5-0-22-0; Taylor 1-0-16-0.

PRIME MINISTER'S XI

†R J Campbell c Butcher b Mullally	0
C J Richards c Croft b Fraser	28
S M Katich b Mullally	0
A Symonds c Stewart b Fraser	10
B J Hodge b Hollioake	12
*M A Taylor c Butcher b Cork	30
D J Marsh c Butcher b Hick	74
B N Creevey c Hegg b Croft	7
M Nicholson c Butcher b Hick	13
L Hansen not out	1
M A Harrity b Hick	14
Extras (b4, lb10, w1, nb2)	17
Total (48.4 overs)	206

Fall of wickets: 2, 48, 52, 70, 105, 122, 185, 186.
Bowling: Fraser 10-2-40-2; Mullally 10-2-28-2; Cork 10-1-25-1; Hollioake 6-0-41-1; Croft 10-0-48-1; Hick 2.4-0-12-3.
Umpires: S J A Taufel and B N Thornton.



Walsh . . . Top wicket-taker

Walsh shown door

GLOUCESTERSHIRE have withdrawn the offer of a new two-year contract to Courtney Walsh, one of the most successful overseas players in county cricket.

They have decided they want an all-rounder as their overseas recruit to cover for the possible inclusion in England's World Cup squad of the captain Mark Alleyne. Walsh's probable World Cup involvement is another reason they have dropped the offer to the 36-year-old West Indies pace man who made a county debut in 1984.

Walsh said: "To me it is bowlers who win matches and I believe these are not the real reasons for the withdrawal of the offer."

Gloucestershire's chief executive Colin Sexstone said: "We had been a bit frustrated by Courtney's lack of commitment since we made him the offer. He hadn't said he was committed to Gloucestershire if he didn't make the West Indies World Cup squad."

Walsh was the leading wicket-taker in first-class cricket last season with 106 victims, and he took over 880 during his 14 years with Gloucestershire.

Rugby Union

Clubs get £10m Euro offer

Robert Armstrong

VERNON PUGH, the chairman of the International Board, last night described the English clubs' boycott of the European Cup as "pathetic" and said the promise of £10 million in a new financial package would bring them back on board.

Pugh has been angered by the clubs' insistence that the boycott will stay in place as long as the European Rugby Cup chairman Tom Kiernan and the Five Nations chief executive Roger Pickering were running the competition.

"It's pathetic if they want cup officials removed before they come back," said Pugh. "They should come back and work from inside. I'm confident that in due course people in the English clubs will acknowledge that it is better to be part of Europe.

"We can create a package of £30 million and five English clubs would get 33 per cent of that — double what they would have got this year. Even so, it is pathetic that they have given away £4 million by not participating in this season's European Cup.

"There is nothing more frustrating for me than what is happening to Europe. We had two good seasons when England were in it and then it has been devalued this year. The competition needs England."

Pugh admitted that a cross-nation competition for next year is still some way off.

Meanwhile the International Board hearing in Dublin over the Rugby Union's alleged breaches of IB regulations was adjourned last night. A temporary suspension, a heavy fine or merely a reprimand remain the main options when Twickenham officials resume presenting their case today.

The RFU team, led by chief executive Francis Baron, is defending charges that it has given England's top clubs carte blanche to ignore the regulations. The clubs have made a legal submission to the European Commission challenging the IB's jurisdiction within the British Isles.

● Cardiff and Swansea were last night each fined £1[illegible] by the Welsh Rugby Union for playing cross-border fixtures against English clubs and negotiating television contracts.

Athletics

Marathon incentive for women to discard male pacemakers

Duncan Mackay

ORGANISERS of next year's Flora London Marathon on April 18 are ignoring Tegla Loroupe's world record set in Rotterdam last April in preference to a time nearly a minute slower.

A bonus of $125,000 (£78,000) will be offered to any woman who beats the record set in a women's only race without the aid of male pacemakers. The present mark was set by Japan's Naoko Takahashi, who clocked 2hr 21min 46sec in the Asian Games this month. That compares with the 2:20.47 Kenya's Loroupe ran when she had two male pacemakers.

Nick Bitel, the chief executive of the London Marathon, said: "We believe that to maintain the integrity of women's marathon running it is essential to recognise times set in women's only races. We are putting our money where our mouth is."

However, Ireland's Catherina McKiernan, the defending champion, doubted the time could be achieved without male pacemakers.

Next year's field includes the former champion Liz McColgan and the Portuguese duo Manuela Machado, the two-time European champion, and Fernanda Riberio, the Olympic 10,000 metres champion who will be making her marathon debut.

Equestrianism

Whitaker in the clear

John Kerr at Olympia

JOHN WHITAKER maintained his recent successful form on the Continental circuit in the one-round Petplan Stakes yesterday.

On the veteran Virtual Village Grannusch he had the fastest of a dozen clears, overtaking Switzerland's British born rider Lesley McNaught on Kim 11. His brother Michael, on Virtual Village Hilton, was another split second behind for third place.

In an entertaining curtain-raiser, the Petplan Relay, John, on Virtual Village Heyman, and his daughter Louise, on Livingston, each bought down a fence, leaving them third behind William and Pippa Funnell.

The game behind the game

Australian cricket is in turmoil. (Yes, Australian cricket). But were Waugh and Warne merely following a global trend? **Matthew Engel** on how batting and bowling became betting



ONE day during the Adelaide Test, my taxi driver was a migrant from Malaysia. His English was indifferent, and conversation difficult. When he heard I was from Britain, he asked if I followed football, and what I thought of Chelsea's last win.

"Do you support Chelsea?" I asked. "No," he said. "I had a bet. I had 10 pound on them." At least that's what I thought he said. This did not seem very interesting and we relapsed into silence. It was a while before something clicked: there are no pounds in Australia: it switched to dollars decades ago. "Wait a minute," I said. "How much did you say you had on Chelsea? He was much more distinct this time. "Ten thou," he replied.

This, apparently, was the customary level of his punting and that of all his Malaysian mates. I decided he didn't need a tip.

As the public tries to make sense of cricket's bribes scandal, it is hard to grasp the crazed extent of Asia's betting boom. The footballing side of things, concentrated in the Far East, emerged blinking into rather dappled sunlight during the Grobbelaar-Basham trial. Asian cricket betting, women travel further west, has remained mysterious.

There are no branches of William Hill on the subcontinent. Betting (except at a few Raj-relic Indian racecourses and some Sri Lankan betting shops) is illegal, conducted by phone and on trust, with clients introduced by friends, as if to the Garrick Club; retribution for breach of that trust is understood to be old-fashioned and rapid.

The amounts involved are staggering: maybe £16 million is staked on every Indian one-day international, and there are up to 50 of those a year. The risks, both for punters and bookmakers, are staggering too: five Indian bookies are said to have committed suicide over the past two years.

It is a world of grubby back rooms, whirring fans, bent coppers, bent sportsmen, green eyeshades (one would like to think) and occasional grotesque violence. Mixed with the familiar smells of India, there seems to be a powerful whiff of 1920s Chicago.

The evidence is that control of the gambling network is exercised not from India itself but from the Gulf states, where Indian and Pakistani workers flocked to find jobs in the wake of the oil boom of the early 1970s.



THERE, in the small but rich sheikhdom of Sharjah, is the cricket stadium which in the past 20 years has staged more international cricket than the major English grounds put together. The exiles work hard and send good money to support their families, but there are few diversions. Women are almost non-existent. Alcohol is mostly illegal, and the hobby of choice only for westerners. In such a society, gambling is inevitable.

And since satellite TV now beams the game almost continually across the region, cricket is the obvious medium. Betting on a one-day international, one bookie's clerk told The Australian newspaper in a rare glimpse behind the veil, "is like eight hours of non-stop sex". Well, each to his own, but it might be some kind of substitute.

The corruption of cricket itself has been an obvious result. The whole history of sport shows that gambling on this scale invariably leads to fixes. Cricket itself was primarily a betting game until 1817, when the MCC got fed up with the criminality and expelled the bookmakers from the temple. Sport can only be kept clean by constant vigilance: ask the Jockey Club.

Most cricketers (Shane Warne might actually be one of the few exceptions) are not paid anything like enough to fend off the attentions of gangsters running operations on this scale, any more than they fended off Kerry Packer and the apartheid-funded South Africans in the past.

Most of the above has been known or suspected for four years. But it has taken the revelations about Warne and Mark Waugh to wake everyone up.

The news has had a profound impact across Australia. This is a country with a touching faith in "champions", a word used much more broadly than in Britain — to describe great players in team sports as well as star individuals. The concept of the dinky-di Aussie, hard but fair, is taken very seriously. The Aussies are less cynical than us about sport, and they consider Warne and Waugh's behaviour an affront to tradition. They have been less inclined to consider the implications for worldwide cricket.

The offer of money for the provision of innocuous information was clearly an attempt to lure the players in much deeper. It seems like a sting that went wrong, perhaps because the gangsters tried to put the heat on them too impatiently. When Warne and Waugh were allegedly approached to fix a match, they squealed. It is not their fault that the Australian Cricket Board did the bare minimum in response.

It is no coincidence that both men are known to like a bet. So, in spades, does Ricky "Punter" Ponting, who was approached for information at an Australian dog track. This suggests links that go beyond Asia. Ponting says he will say more to the Australian Board's newly-appointed investigator.

One suspects the whole truth is quite terrible. Much of it may drip out over the months ahead. But the administrators have known many of the facts for four years. They ignored them. That may be the most terrible thing of all.



Banner headline: a fan's view in Adelaide; the repentant Waugh and Warne (left)
PHOTOGRAPH: LAURENCE GRIFFITHS

Sporting stings



Pete Rose
He was not merely the most prolific hitter in baseball history. He was the sort of bull-in-china-shop, blue-collar ballplayer America adores. All that changed in 1989 when reports of him betting on games while managing the Cincinnati Reds led to a lifetime ban. Yet his continued exclusion from the Hall of Fame has become a cause celebre, the likes of ex-President Jimmy Carter urging clemency. An even more venerable slate-cleaning campaign involves "Shoeless" Joe Jackson (below), the batting



colossus barred *sine die*, along with seven Chicago White Sox team-mates, for taking bribes to throw the 1919 World Series. His advocates point out that, bar one fluffed catch, he had been his customary prodigious self. Inspired the (probably apocryphal) line "Say it ain't so, Joe", not to mention two movies — Field of Dreams and Eight Men Out — and, to a degree, The Great Gatsby.

Dennis Lillee and Rod Marsh
On the fourth day of the 1981 Ashes Test at Headingley, England were not so much staring defeat in the face as giving it a good snogging, as reflected by Ladbrokes' odds: 500–1 against. Australia's demon fast bowler and rugged wicketkeeper spotted this on the scoreboard, contemplated putting £50 on England then settled for £10, whereupon Ian Botham and Bob Willis conjured the most celebrated of all Pommy triumphs. Though "crucified" and condemned, no disciplinary action was taken. Regrets? Not Lillee. "I only wish I'd had more on," he wrote. "I didn't regard it as betting against my team or my country. The odds were ridiculous for a two-horse race." And besides: "I'd flatten anyone who ever suggested I threw a game."

The Trodmore Hunt
On August 1 1898, The Sportsman printed the card for the Trodmore Hunt. The editor had published in good faith, as editors invariably do. Bookies took bets, as they are wont to do. The following day The Sportsman ran the results as usual. A few bookies had already paid out but others had waited for the evidence of hard ink. After eyebrows were raised by the SP of one particular winner, an inquiry discovered that, in actual fact, Trodmore was no more rooted in reality than Narnia. Nor were the masterminds tracked down. They made Newman and Redford look like novice hurdlers.



The Treble Chance
Who says tabloids lack virtue? On April 12 1964, one of the less reputable Sunday papers revealed that three Sheffield Wednesday players had engineered a defeat by Ipswich in order to land £3,100 on the Treble Chance. Two other League matches that day, it transpired, had also been nobbled. Within weeks more than a dozen players had been incriminated: most received life bans; 10 were jailed, Peter Swan and Tony Kay (left) among them. As strong candidates for Alf Ramsey's World Cup side, here were football's very own Pete Bests.
Rob Steen

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8	Microsoft	US

Extract from "World's most respected companies." Financial Times 30th November 1998.

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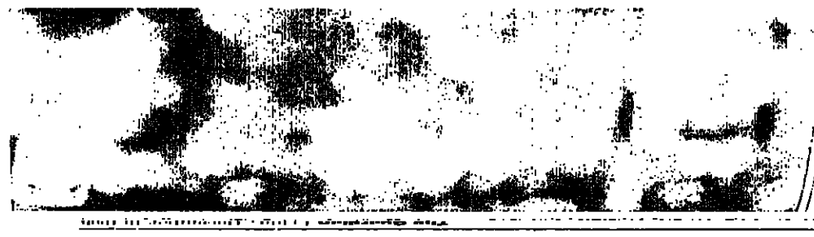
Cone makes light of weight

Boxer looks unsinkable

A

Chris Hawkins expects Lamin Fofana to make a winning debut at Liverpool

The Guardian Friday December 18 1998



Football

Mcgrath wants more influence for black players

JUST OUT

The Prince Of Egypt

★★★

Dir: Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells. With Val Kilmer, Ralph Fiennes, Michelle Pfeiffer, Sandra Bullock, Steve Martin. Cert U, 99 mins.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

1. Out Of Sight

George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez cut to the chase in Soderbergh's fast, funny, sexy film noir treasure.

2. My Name Is Joe

Peter Mullan's performance powers Loach's tough drama from Glasgow's DSS landscape.

3. The Boys

Rowan Woods's Australian murder story, revolving around the oppressive lounge and kitchen landscape of three simmering brothers.

4. Texas Chain Saw Massacre

Bone sculptures and psychotic human wrecks clatter about in Tobe Hooper's unearthed horror landmark.

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Pyramid selling

Jonathan Romney on DreamWorks' bombastic, bitty exercise in marketing

FILM OF THE WEEK: THE PRINCE OF EGYPT William Faulkner once reluctantly agreed to script Howard Hawks's Biblical epic Land Of The Pharaohs. The only trouble, he said, was that he didn't know how a Pharaoh talked: "Is it all right if I write him as a Kentucky colonel?" As legend has it, the first version of the script began with the line, "Well, boys, how's work going on the Pyramids?"

The Prince Of Egypt, the long-awaited Biblical animation from Hollywood superstudio DreamWorks, has its fair share of awkward Pharaoh-speak — "You Hebrews have been nothing but trouble." But overall, it could have done with a bit more Kentuckian pith, instead of the Sunday school piety we get. For its latest attempt, following the zippier Antz, to tackle Disney on its own turf, DreamWorks stakes all on a quality adult animation — and what better source material than the Book of Exodus? "This part of the Bible touches on sophisticated themes," explains one of the producers in the press notes. In reality, though, "adult" simply means fewer gags than Disney, and fewer funny animals, scrappily portrayed at that — the Midianites' flocks would shame Hanna-Barbera.

You know you're on hallowed ground from the start, as the opening caption, like a sonorous shem before a prize-giving speech, alerts you that "the motion picture you are about to see" is "true to the essence, values and integrity" of the Moses story. They went for broke on this one, consulting Egyptologists, archaeologists, Bible scholars, historians and religious leaders of many races and creeds — the notes list 12 rabbis, several cardinals, a monsignor and the Rev Jesse Jackson. To prepare for the production, the film's creative team, led Moses-like by DreamWorks mogul-and ex-Disney renegade Jeffrey Katzenberg, travelled through Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, presumably for 40 days and 40 nights. It doesn't say whether they fasted or dwelt in the tents of Jehosaphat.

Despite the attention to authenticity, it's clear that this epic worships only one god — the graven idol of Cecil B DeMille. The pious grandiosity of The Ten Commandments — a film so big he made it twice — is here, but directors Chapman, Hickner and Cox can't begin to match the Big C's overflowing vulgarity. Even so, that's the model we can't help measuring this film against. As we watch young Moses as a callow prince in the Pharaoh's palace, we're just waiting to see when he'll sprout the beard and blossom into Charlton Heston.

He never quite does. In what is essentially a standard Hollywood coming-of-age story, Moses starts out as a spoilt teen, chariot-racing Ben-Hur style with his half-brother Rameses, with whom he enjoys a skittish relationship that's less fraternal than just plain flirty. Then he goes forth into the desert, throws away his Cher wig, and by the end has become an easy-going charismatic young rabbi, the sort who'd fit in nicely at the new Saatchi Synagogue.

In fact, there's altogether too little Old Testament wrath and retribution in this story: none of that nasty business with the Golden Calf, while nine of the Ten Plagues are dealt with hurriedly in the course of one song. Only the Slaying of the First Born gets the treatment it deserves, as a celestial laser show staged in reverent hush with sotto voce lamentations. The Burning Bush is more a Radioactive Shrub which speaks in the soothing tones of a self-help hypnotist. The Parting of the Red Sea comes nearest to inspiring awe — at least as much as a Las Vegas water spectacular, although it's an inspired touch to have the silhouettes of big fishes visible through the walls of water.

Put this way, the story sounds like a succession of magic routines — which, in a sense, it is. The Moses story is the Bible's show-stopping miracle sequence, a David Copperfield-style act that gets bigger and bigger, after starting with the warm-up illusionism of turning an ordinary stick into a serpent. This moment provides the film's one dash of wit: when Moses's staff becomes a rather lame serpent, Rameses' house magicians counter with their own razzle-dazzle, featuring the whole Egyptian pantheon: "By the might of Horus, you will kneel before us!" By the end, though, faith is vindicated, and the film delivers a familiar Californian message of self-esteem. As the song goes, "What miracles you can achieve! If you believe!" Or, as they say in Hollywood, it just shows what you can do if you have the staff.

This is not an unintelligent film. DreamWorks have at least taken up the challenge recently set by Disney of 'making' animation that isn't exclusively white in its assumptions. The Egyptians look distinctly African-American, the Hebrews like modern Israelis, and in the big exodus sequence, you can spot a few Asian faces and some that are unmistakably Ethiopian. But otherwise the old toga-movie clichés rule. The Egyptians speak in bossy English accents — Pharoah Seti is Patrick Stewart in fruity James Mason mode, while Rameses is Ralph Fiennes at his most lip-curlingly effete. The American voices are much less distinctive — Steve Martin and Martin Short barely register as the comedy priests, Val Kilmer is less than authoritative as Moses. The only immediately recognisable star is Jeff Goldblum, who voices Aaron as a nervy Upper West Side kvetcher. Oh, for the Bronx rasps of Judas 'n' da boys from Scorsese's Last Temptation Of Christ.

The big question, though, is whether it works visually. The terrible answer is that we may be getting spoilt by the digital trickery of Antz and recent live-action apocalypses. For all its scale, The Prince Of Egypt looks less than epic, with the anaemic flatness of a Children's Illustrated Bible. The notes describe the film as "drawn live-action", which is a bit of cheek — I thought the term was "cartoon". Presumably they mean it looks realistic, which is true up to a point. The rendering of little physical gestures — a flick of a hand — is really fine, rather more expressive than the faces. But the film feels oddly like an inventory of cartoon technologies, from traditional to modern. It does fantastic teeming multitudes, but then you remember that you've already seen Multitude Technology at work in Disney's more expressive Mulan.

The prime cards are the film's huge vistas and the way it mixes 2- and 3-D effects. The 3-D often feels too computer game-ish to be involving — a Ben-Hur-style chariot race whizzes us at breakneck pace through the streets of a sort of Virtual Luxor. What's more impressive is the framing of flat-looking figures against vast swathes of landscape or architectural space, like stage backdrops mixing Egyptian with abstract expressionism. It's just a shame that the colour palette opts so much for the feeble orangey-purple pastels of recent Disney.

The real virtuoso sequence is Moses's dream, done as a palace mural with characters scuttling across walls and sloping around pillars. For all the grandiosity, though, the film excels on tiny details — the little trickles of sand at Moses's feet, the handprints on the bricks. Perhaps you might like to infer a theological message from this.

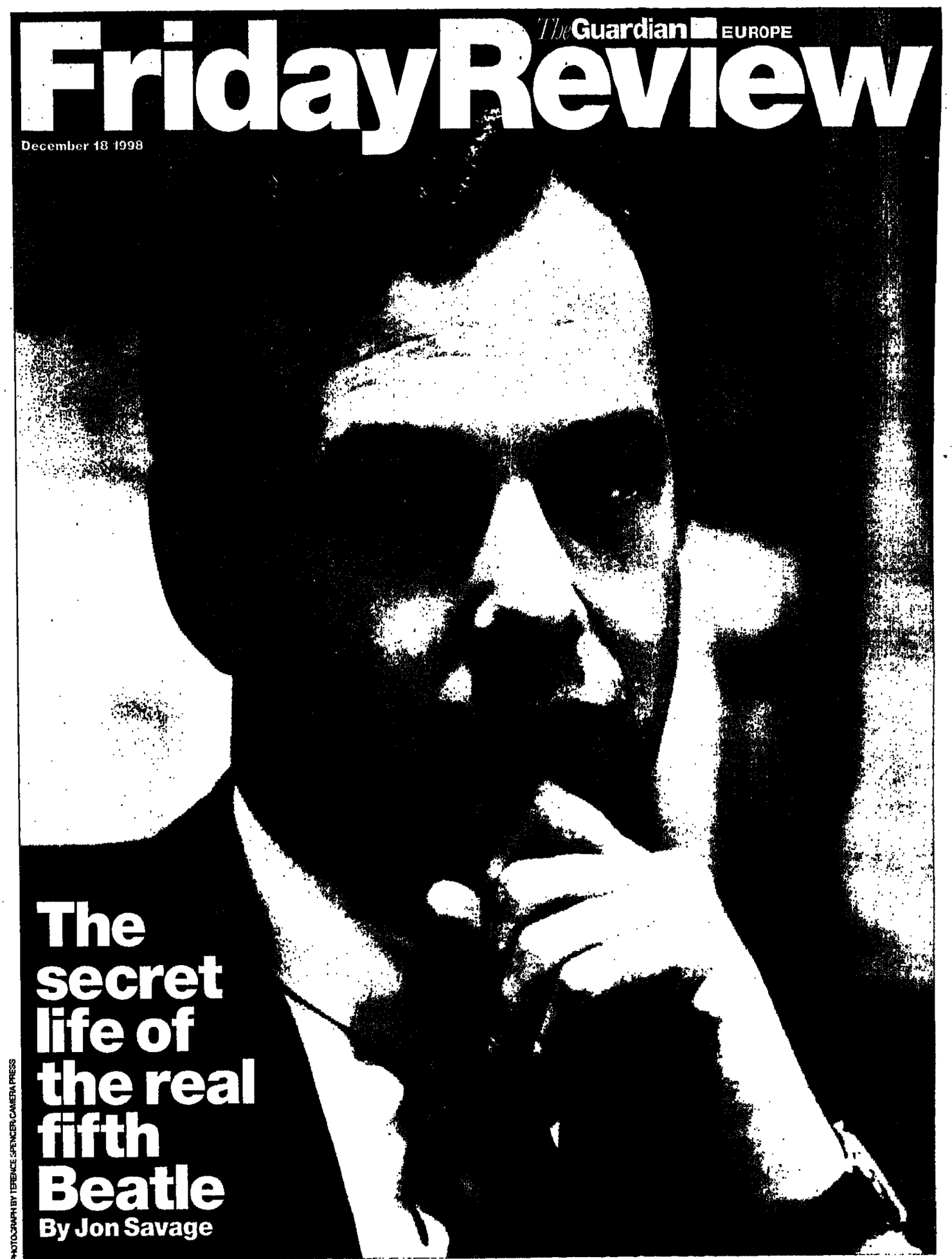
The Prince of Egypt is so bombastic and so bitty that it's hard to get involved. You keep thinking, this works, this doesn't — loved the lean cattle, the fat ones not so hot. And, by making the story so ecumenical, the film blands out. It's an all-purpose parable of spiritual and/or ethnic conversion or feel-good deliverance, but there's not much interesting subtext. At a pinch, you could read it as a parable about the prophets Katzenberg, Spielberg and Geffen leading their people out of Hollywood studio slavery and into DreamWorks' Promised Land — and if you think that, keep taking the tablets. This Moses just don't deliver.

The Burning Bush is more a radioactive shrub speaking in the soothing tones of a hypnotist

The Guardian EUROPE

Friday Review

December 18 1998



PHOTOGRAPH BY TERENCE SPENCER/CAMERA PRESS

The secret life of the real fifth Beatle

By Jon Savage

Alan Bennett's vision of Peter Pan iv | CDs of the year vi | Jonathan Romney reviews The Prince of Egypt viii

My cultural life



Ian McCaskill
Weatherman turned panto rogue

The arts will mean more to me now since I retired from being a wage slave. I've been keen on visual arts since I saw a major Picasso exhibition in Glasgow when I was very young. It was just after the war and we didn't have many art books at home or school so this exhibition really excited me. Everyone else hated it. Looking back, my parents were very forward-thinking for taking me to it. Now I always get to the major exhibitions in London and the North.

My missus and I make an effort to see all the serious theatre in London. We don't go in for the Phantom Of The Operas. I've nothing against all that feel-good stuff but it doesn't turn me on. The Invention Of Love is more my thing. It was absolutely terrific but very challenging — don't expect an easy night. John Wood's performance was amazing. There's one speech in which he babbles away in English, Greek and Latin — a real tour de force.

I want to see everything at the West Yorkshire Playhouse with Ian McKellen — our "friend in the north" — while we still have him. I saw him in The Cherry Orchard recently at the tiny courtyard theatre. He was so laid back! There was much gnashing of teeth when my wife went to Stratford to see The Merchant Of Venice, which I couldn't get to because I was stuck in panto.

I'm keen to see more film now I've retired. I've just bought Halliwell's latest film guide to catch up. There's a healthy repertory scene in London but it had always been impossible to keep up because of my shifts. I'll try to see Saving Private Ryan and all the European films I severely missed. But I won't be seeing The Mask — not my sort of thing at all.

At the end of the day I collapse in front of the telly — isn't that what TV was made for? God knows what's on the screen. If I can, I catch the end of Newsnight or any current affairs programme. And I love stand-up comedy. Young people are so talented — especially Rory Bremner. He's such a hard working, clever, inventive man.

Now I'm in panto, I'm so privileged to be working with Henry McGee, who's been on the stage for 50 years, and Rod Hull. I can't believe my luck being parachuted into the company of these professionals.

Ian McCaskill is currently performing as a comic rogue in Puss In Boots at the Theatre Royal, Windsor until January 16.
Interview by Caroline Egan

'No one else had the flair, the panache, the wit that Brian had,' says Paul McCartney. So why did he die miserably and alone?

Jon Savage describes how Brian Epstein fell victim to drugs and the pressures of being a secret homosexual

From the day that he first experienced the Beatles at Liverpool's Cavern — "a vast, engulfing sound" — Brian Epstein devoted his life to their success and well-being. "He just had this vision," says Alistair Taylor, with whom Epstein made that lunch-time visit on December 9 1961. "Within half an hour, he wanted to manage them. He could see what they could become."

From that meeting came a cultural and social revolution. The Beatles changed everything and Epstein was the architect of that change. The statistics are staggering. By the end of December 1963, Epstein's acts — the Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Billy J Kramer — had spent more than 30 weeks at number one in the 1963 UK charts; four months later, the Beatles held the top five places in the US top 40 — a hitherto unthinkable feat, and a coup not repeated since.

You'd have thought that managing the biggest group in the world would be enough — Elvis's manager, Colonel Tom Parker, couldn't believe that the Beatles' manager had more than the one act — but, during the next three years, Epstein continued to manage the enduringly popular Pacemakers and Cilla Black; he expanded Nems (North End Music Stores, the Epstein family firm) into dozens of companies; he managed the bullfighter Henry Higgins; he produced the West End premiere of James Baldwin's Amen Corner; he ran a West End theatre, the Saville, which showcased Jimi Hendrix, Little Richard, the Four Tops and a wide range of rock and soul talent.

For all this achievement, history has not been kind to Brian Epstein. As a result of his premature death in August 1967, people regard him as a prime example of that old adage — "money can't buy you happiness". When his homosexuality became public — after John Lennon's excoriating, 1971 Rolling Stone interview — the gloves came off. Subsequent accounts — most notably in Albert Goldman's book, Lives Of John Lennon - promoted ideas that have stuck; that Epstein was lousy at business, dominated by the Beatles, sad. Even Joe Orton had a pop in his diaries: "A thoroughly weak, flaccid type."

Yet, as ever, you have to consider who is doing the telling. Epstein rejected Orton's Up Against It script for a possible Beatles film, and Goldman's source for some of his factoids was Nicky Byrne, who was in litigation with Epstein for two years. The problem for anyone rash enough to approach the Beatles' story yet again — no matter at how oblique an angle — is that the myth has become so encrusted with assertion and counter-assertion that when you couch it in book form you have a problem of who to believe that is library-sized.

So, in making The Brian Epstein Story for Arena, director Anthony Wall and I decided to forget about all the books except Epstein's own A Cellarful Of Noise, published at the height of Beatlemania in August 1964. We didn't want theory; we wanted to talk to people who had been there, who had known Epstein. Because, for all the media fuss surrounding the Beatles, their manager has emerged as little more than a cipher in their story — yet his was a central role: as Paul McCartney says, "If anyone was the fifth Beatle, it was Brian, you know."

Our first port of call was Epstein's ghostwriter on A Cellarful Of Noise, Derek Taylor, who, despite his grave illness, received us with perfect grace. Taylor had been through the full white light madness of the Beatles' August 1964 US tour as their press officer; his own writings contain the most incisive accounts of the Beatles and their myth. "Brian was undoubtedly very impressive," he remembered, "A very soft appearance. He didn't look as though he did any exercise, but then a lot of people didn't then. I certainly didn't, and I was very thin. Cigarette smoking. So was he, nervy. Very well dressed, very good suit, lovely shirt: these were what made people different. The detail.

"It is extraordinary that he could be almost immediately acceptable to those four. The only way it could have worked is if it was absolutely right. It was on, in other words. It's no good pretending it works if it doesn't. But thinking big: that's what bound Brian and the boys together. They all did think big. When he signed them up in that office in Whitechapel he told them: "I think I could help you." He actually believed he could, and he was prepared to sit it out with them, with all their cheek and impudence. In a way they had a lot in common: just the vernacular was different."

To Epstein, the Beatles arrived as the answer to a question that had been gnawing at him for his whole life. Born on September 19, 1934, he was the eldest child of a prospering merchant family. Brian was mercurial, obsessive, and stubborn in pursuing his own path. His school days were disrupted by war and anti-semitism. His ambition to be a dress designer crumbled under family pressure. His dissatisfaction led him to an unsuccessful stint with Rada; his national service had ended prematurely with his discharge on "medical grounds".

By 1961 he was making a success of the family business, but was, by his own account, "a little listless and bored". The shadow here,



End of the Beatles? Epstein's death was 'a great loss' said McCartney



2 Pulp
This Is Hardcore (Island)
Much was expected of Pulp after the award-winning, million-selling Different Class, and they did not disappoint — artistically, anyway. This Is Hardcore dared to deviate from the path of its successful predecessor. It's a post-party-comedown album built around Jarvis Cocker's revelation that fame can be as disappointing as obscurity. Its bleak vignettes describe watching porn movies in hotel rooms, the diminishing returns of partying and "the sound of someone losing the plot, making out that they're okay when they're not". The Jarvster's come a long way from Sheffield, and continues to dazzle.

3 Bernard Butler
People Move On (Creation)
"I'd never heard him sing a note before," said Brett Anderson of Suede's former guitarist, who turned out to sound very different indeed from Anderson. Butler the Voice turned out to be a warm, honeyed entity who provided a focus for his flights of guitar-fancy, which were also a long way from his Suede style. He created lush, melancholy landscapes of tunes that begged the question: what did he and Suede ever have in common?

4 Guy Chadwick
Lazy, Soft & Slow (Setanta)
This one may have failed to restore Chadwick's career to the not-very-grand heights of his House Of Love days, but its a failure which may actually benefit Chadwick, providing more bitter grist to the song-writing mill. The album is a graceful evocation of what it's like to wake up to the fact that as life is fundamentally disappointing, you may as well revel in the small things. "Lazy, soft and slow" aptly describes Chadwick's style and vocals, which turn Iggy Pop's Fall In Love With Me into something its author couldn't have envisaged.

5 Beastie Boys
Hello, Nasty (Capitol)
In which the oldest Boys in the biz got their groove back. Age may have transformed the Beasties into conscience-stricken adults but on record they're perennially 17. Ad-Rock, MCA and Mike D rediscovered their energy on a set reminiscent of a musical whoopee cushion. The big-mouthed pop-rap of their debut, Licensed To Ill, muscled back into the mix, which also included psychedelia, rock, Eastern influences and every damn thing they could lay their hands on.

6 Terry Callier
Timepeace (Verve)
Callier is a fiftysomething black American who found fanzette as a folk singer in the sixties, was a short lived Northern Soul favourite in the seventies and spent the eighties working as a computer programmer. His current incarnation is a cross between Nina Simone and Gil Scott Heron. So relaxed he's horizontal, he imbues Timepeace with a twilit broodiness.

7 Garbage
Version 2.0 (Mushroom)
The follow-up to their 4-million-selling debut is in this list not for its attractiveness or loveableness, because it possesses neither. Rather, it's because its frigid perfection has insidiously left its mark. The UK/US quartet, whose Shirley Manson is arguably the most literate woman in pop, don't lend themselves to adoration, but they do inspire arm's-length admiration. Though Version 2.0, whose title bespeaks the music's reliance on technology, didn't yield any singles as inescapable as Stupid Girl or Queer, it was just as singalong in its frozen way. Not cool, but very cold.

8 Eva Cassidy
Songbird (Hot)
Just 33 when she died of cancer two years ago, Cassidy never achieved wide recognition. This compilation, which also includes tracks from a posthumously-released third LP, is an introduction, and a farewell, to a gifted interpreter of soul, blues and, oddly enough, go-go. Not bad for a white girl from the suburbs who didn't write her own songs. She was blessed with a translucently beautiful voice that made even Fleetwood Mac songs sound noble — what greater praise?

9 Massive Attack
Mezzanine (Virgin)
They're probably not on Forgie's Top 10 of the year after Robert "3D" dei Naja told her "Fuck you very much" at the MTV Awards, but the trippy prog-hoppers scored their third successive triumph of an album. The four-year gap since the last meant that the sound came as a shock all over again. You'd have thought that Massive's methodology — the slow-mo beats, sinister echoes, unnerving vocals and creaking woodwork — could no longer raise the hair on the back of your neck, but it did.

10 Karen Ramirez
Distant Dreams (Mercury)
Beware most singles described as "club hits", which is code for "chart flop". Karen Ramirez's Troubled Girl was the rare club hit that deserved to be a chart smash, as did her debut album. While many female dance vocalists are mere window dressing, she stamps her vivid personality all over her music, which is a hybrid of Latin, house and pop. Airy, sensual, extroverted and introspective, Distant Dreams is as inviting as springtime.

existence of grey areas between the black and white, their capacity for feeling hasn't diminished. This Is My Truth is as deeply-felt as the horrorstruck and unlistenable Holy Bible. The feelings are simply channelled differently.

"It's still unfashionable to believe in principles," Bradfield sings on the closing track, SYMM, pinpointing the factor that makes the group perennial outsiders despite the awards and million-selling albums. This Is My Truth (whose title quotes NHS founder Aneurin Bevan) is rigid with principle, dealing with topics Noel Gallagher has never heard of: the Spanish civil war, the "silent" arsonist Gibbons twins, Churchill's depressions.

But Wire's lyrics often run aground, bumping along as eloquence eludes him, which is where the musical Manics, Bradfield and Moore, come in. This Is My Truth is their album, its grand scale a result of their considerable talent. Bradfield especially shines as both a gifted guitarist/arranger and a vocalist of passion and unselfconscious sincerity. With this album he becomes one of the decade's great rock voices.

He and Moore provide the edge that makes the album so rewarding time after time. Three months isn't long enough to decide whether a record will endure, but it has all the ingredients of album of the year: passion, invective, intelligence, memorable tunes and, crucially, connectedness. They believe that what they're doing matters.

● Rap has been brutalised halfway back to another Daisy Age. Just like 1989, it's getting split between scowling bullies and sarky intellectuals. If RZA gets his act together he will produce an insanely great album and make the whole argument redundant.
● Zoe Ball epitomises Ibiza about as much as I do. And I'm a supercilious young fogey who goes everywhere in a suit. So not very much then.

And now, some albums I liked (j)a lot
1. Freestylers: We Rock Hard (Freskanova) Brilliant, fresh update of eighties electro and hip hop.
2. Massive Aattack: Mezzanine (Virgin) Huge, dark, original. Third album, third masterpiece.
3. Air Moon Safari (Virgin) Lovely, lovely, lovely.
4. En Vogue: The Best Of (east west) They had an album proper (EV3) out this year. But a great singles band so what the hell.
5. Deep Dish: Junk Science (deConstruction) Deliciously moody, tuneful garage from New York.
6. Groove Armada: Northern Star (Tummy Touch) Up there with the first Orb LP.
7. Faithless: Sunday 8PM (Cheeky) Unique house anthems with no added camembert.
8. Rae & Christian: Northern Sulphuric Soul (Grand Central) Does what it says on the tin. Perhaps someone will send me a finished copy now.
9. Unkle: Psyence Fiction (Mo'Wax): DJ Shadow turns lead into gold
10. Rasmus: Mass Hysteria (Bolshi) Cracking Brit-beat album. Albeit from Sweden.



Any way you like . . . the Freestylers, lovin' it

Hacks' tracks

We asked the nation's top music editors to reveal their favourite albums of the year. . .

John Harris, Select:
Gomez: Bring It On
Beta Band: 3 EPs
Air: Moon Safari
Fatboy Slim: You've Come A Long Way Baby
Blockbox Recorder: England Made Me
Steve Sutherland, NME
Mercury Rev: Deserter's Songs
Beta Band: Three EPs
Beck: Mutations
Hole: Celebrity Skin
Fatboy Slim: You've Come A Long Way Baby
David Davies, Q
Smashing Pumpkins: Adore
Air: Moon Safari
Madonna: Ray Of Light
REM: Up
Massive Attack: Mezzanine
Johnny Mekle, Smash Hits
Lauryn Hill: The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill
Madonna: Ray of Light
Beastie Boys: Hello Nasty
Five: Five
Pulp: This Is Hardcore
Ajax Scott, Music Week
Brandy: Never Say Never
Garbage: Version 2.0
Maxwell: Embrya
Greensleeves Reggae Sampler 17: Various Artists
Busta Rhymes: Extinction Level Event
Scott Manson, Ministry Magazine
Air: Moon Safari
Beastie Boys: Hello Nasty
Massive Attack: Mezzanine
Chemical Brothers: Brothers Gonna Work It Out
Money Mark: Push The Button
Neil Stevenson, Mixmag
Kruder and Dorfmeister: The K&D Sessions
Steps: Step One
Mickey Finn & Aphrodite: Takeover Bid
Cream Anthems: Mixed by Tall Paul and Seb Fontaine
Smashing Pumpkins: Adore
Jonathan King, Tipsheet
Whitney Houston: My Love Is Your Love
Susan Black: From His Demo Collection
Matchbox 20: Yourself or Someone Like You
Dave Matthews: Before These Crowded Streets
The Very Best of Meatloaf
Ian Mcleish, Top of the Pops magazine
The Beta Band: 3 Eps
Steps: Step One
Billie: Honey To The B
Belle and Sebastian: The Boy With The Arab Strap
Rae and Christian: Northern Sulphuric Soul
Philip Alexander, Kerrang!
Clutch: The Elephant Riders
Queens of the Stone Age: Queens Of The Stone Age
Idlewild: Hope Is Important
Sleep: Jerusalem
Ash: Nu-Clear Sounds
Matt Snow, Mojo
Massive Attack: Mezzanine
Gillian Welch: Hell Among The Yearlings
Bob Dylan: Live At The Royal Albert Hall 1966
Elvis Costello and Burt Bacharach: Painted From Memory
Lucinda Williams: Car Wheels On A Gravel Road
Research by Curtis Brown





'No one else had the flair, the panache, the ... with that Brian Epstein had'

Music

Rumours of its demise are greatly exaggerated. **Caroline Sullivan** assesses the year that rock didn't die

Sermon of the year

When they compile the musical history of the nineties, 1998 will pose a problem.

The year has been singularly unmemorable, failing to produce a new Radiohead or Prodigy, a monster-selling album or an identifiable trend. The NME was so concerned about rock's directionlessness (maybe that's it — The New Directionlessness) that it declared it dead. Later it bemoaned "the disappearance of tribalism", ie the fact that there's no modern equivalent of hippies or goths.

The Rock is Dead story used as its premise the low sales figures that characterised the charts over the summer. Albums were reaching number one on only 30,000 sales — proof that music is no longer relevant, right? Er, wrong — it was proof of a seasonal slump, which was reversed in the early autumn, when eagerly-awaited albums by the Manic Street Preachers, Robbie Williams and George Michael sold well over 100,000 copies per week. Rock Not Dead — official.

But the music industry *is* having a health crisis. Buy-outs and takeovers led to the inevitable trimming of rosters with acclaimed but commercially-unsuccessful bands like Gorky's Zygotic Mynci and the 60Ft Dolls finding themselves labelless, the latter just weeks before the release of a new album.

Oasis went on holiday and there was also no new material from other major names, like Blur, The Prodigy and The Verve. While some bands who did release new records found that the love affair between them and the public had cooled — most notably Pulp, whose brilliant This Is Hardcore failed to match Different Class's million sales. Ash and Mansun, chart-topping golden boys of 1996, had to settle for places much further down the charts for their second albums.

This left the way open for dance music to prosper in all its permutations. The Beastie Boys, Massive Attack and Fatboy Slim basked in critical and commercial approbation, as did Daft Punk and Air. The success of the last two marked a turning point in relations between French pop and the rest of the world. It's now legally acceptable to almost like le pop Français.

Actually getting to hear it was a different matter, with the changes at Radio 1 and Xfm. The latter, "London's only alternative", became not very alternative when it was bought by Capital Radio. Meanwhile, Radio 1's new ambience was embodied by the promotion of Zöe Ball to sole breakfast show figurehead.

With the likes of Ball at Radio 1, teen-pop thrived. B*Witched, Billie, Boyzone, Steps, 911 and Five all colonised the Top 10, precipitating mutterings of a new glided age for pop. Whatever Steps and company's Nutrasweet merits, their popularity meant less airtime for more "deserving" cases like, say, Mercury Prize winners Gomez. Their victory was one of the most unexpected in the prize's seven-year history, their teenage psychedelic Mississippi delta blues filling a niche no one knew existed. So did the talents of Elliott Smith, The Beta Band and Mercury Rev.

In the end the biggest headlines were made by the band who've made them for the last two years, the Spice Girls. With Ginger's departure, Sporty and Scary's singles and the conception of two real Baby Spices, they were inescapable. But while friendship may never end, non-fans can take heart from their Christmas single - - it's called Goodbye.



These are our trees, play with your own ... overjoyed Manics celebrate coming top of the pile
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY EARLE

POP CD OF THE YEAR

Manic Street Preachers
This Is My Truth, Tell Me Yours
(Epic)

Not only are the Manics (obviously) not the same people they were before Richie Edwards succumbed to despair, they're not even the same people who made the odds-beatingly triumphant *Everything Must Go*. The two years between that album and This Is My Truth, Tell Me Yours have begat changes that would make the trio unrecognisable to their 1990 selves.

There's been nothing drastic, more a gradual maturing and ... perhaps the word is "calming". There was a telling moment in the self-titled BBC2 documentary, broadcast the week after the album's September release, that showed Nicky Wire, James Dean Bradfield and Sean Moore laughing as they watched old footage of themselves. It was the embarrassed amusement of any three nearly-30-year-olds confronted with the bloody-minded certainty of their youth. They regret none of it, says Wire, not even the moment Edwards allowed his *chaos to surface by cutting "4 Real"* into his arm, but they don't want to go back there.

Wire, who is currently full of the joys of Hoovering and househusbandry, has even apologised for his 1991 remark that Michael Stipe deserved to die of Aids.

But if they no longer deal in absolutes, even admitting the

FAST FORWARD

A £20,000 sardine tin which was stolen from an advertising hoarding for the Beastie Boys' Hello Nasty album last month has been returned. It was thrown from a speeding van outside Channel 4's offices last week with a note: "We got fed up with nicking traffic cones. Sorry for the hassle." All a bit fishy we think

My name is legion

Techno, big beat or trip hop? Dance became ever more varied this year. **David Bennun** reports

It's all got very confusing, even by the already bewildering standards of dance, but here's a few basics to be going along with.

- The French have wreaked their revenge. After years of pop derision, they all but took over the dance scene with cheesy house anthems, Music Sounds Better With You and the much-bootlegged Gym Tonic, both of them created under alias by Daft Punk's Thomas Bangalter. They also gave us Air, whose Moon Safari album was pure languid delight.
- Techno has apparently had something of a revival. But with the best will in the world, most of it still sounds like a bunch of hatchet-faced purists banging their heads against the wall and looping the results.
- Big beat carried onwards and upwards. It's been years now and no sign of stopping. Personally, I can't get enough of big beat, because it's actually meant to be fun, rather than an exercise in avant-garde endurance (see 2 and variations thereof.) Norman Cook made a top-notch Fatboy Slim album. Well done.
- Massive Attack are quite possibly the greatest British band of any kind this decade.
- And Faithless and Freestylers aren't half bad either.
- New school breakbeat, or nu skool breakz as I refuse to call it, is pretty fine too. And certainly a lot more enjoyable than any of the prog jungle or angular cerebral drum'n'bass nonsense that's been shipped out by the supertanker-load this year.
- Speed garage is bad except for the bits which are really very good (187 Lockdown).
- R&B is boring and samey and obsessed with technique and full of cold histrionic vocals except for the bits which are absolutely fantastic (En Vogue, Blackstreet, the chunky goddess who is Missy "Misdemeanour" Elliot.)



This way boys... Epstein (right) with the Fab Four
PHOTOGRAPH: RAY MOLLER

which could not have been admitted when A Collarful Of Noise was published, was his sexuality. Taylor explains: "He wouldn't have had anything in there that implied or hinted at homosexuality, because of the danger of jail after the Lord Montague thing [a prominent gay scandal in which three men were jailed in March 1954], which was a frightening, horrible witch-hunt only 10 years before. But he told me this after only a morning; and how well did he know me? Not well, but a bit. It was a risk."

It's easy to forget now — when, despite pockets of resistance, there is greater public tolerance — just how off the map homosexuals were in the fifties and early sixties. Epstein's own thoughts on *his life are contained in a document* written for his then solicitor in the late fifties, notes for a defence against a charge of importuning: "I believed that my own willpower was the best thing with which to overcome my homosexuality. And I believe my life may become contented and I may even have attained a public success. I was determined to win through the horrors of this world. I have always felt deeply for the persecuted: for the Jews, the coloured people, for the old and society's misfits."

The truism is that Epstein's interest in the Beatles was fuelled by sexual attraction, and this may well be the case. A persistent rumour which can be neither proved nor disproved (as both parties are now dead), is that he had an encounter with John Lennon while on a spring 1963 holiday together in Barcelona, as imagined in the film The Life And Times. Yet this is an essentialist argument: even if Epstein did feel a sexual pull, it could easily have been transmuted into the care with which he managed the group. Not every sexual desire has to be physically acted upon.

There was another element in their mutual bonding: for the first time in his life, Epstein felt as though he belonged. "A lot of *stress has been laid on Brian fancying John Lennon*," says pop manager Simon Napier-Bell, who encountered Epstein at the end of his life; "But I think it was far more being a loner and suddenly finding he was part of a group. I think that was much more what he was interested in, and that brought him into a broader group again than the Beatles."

According to McCartney, this theatricality was the key: "We had been playing together a little while and we were starting to feel that we were getting good. But we needed *someone to push us and give us a* few clues as to how we might go further. It became obvious that Brian was that person. He had a theatrical flair, having gone to Rada. He knew a lot of people. He was a great networker, so it became clear he would be very good for you. It is always very helpful having someone theatrical out front; there's got to be someone out there who says: 'That was really good' or 'When you moved over, they lost you. Don't do that next time.' It's a director: that's really what he was."

When the Beatles hit in the way that Epstein had predicted in 1962 — "One day they will be greater than Presley" - - his showbusiness connections worked conclusively in their favour. Part of a London circle that included Lionel Bart and Alma Cogan, Epstein picked Alun Owen — well known for the play No Trams To Lime Street — to write the script for A Hard Day's Night, an inspiration for a whole generation of rock groups and still one of the best pop films ever. But then Epstein was already on record as saying that he thought pop music was an "art form", and he totally supported the Beatles' instinctive attempts to make it so — that empathetic quality which makes him the doyen of pop managers to the present day.

By the time it was becoming absolutely clear that the Beatles were like no other pop group, success had brought the problems of over-expansion. "He found it impossible to delegate all the time that I knew him," says Taylor. With this increasing pressure came crippling anxiety: as Epstein states in A Cellarful Of Noise, "When a disc goes badly or a business venture fails, I am the one that suffers most, for I hold myself responsible. It isn't the money that worries me; it's the failure."

"Brian was obsessed with controlling a situation," says his US attorney and close friend Nat Weiss, who met him in summer 1964. "Anything done outside his area of control brought a tirade of abuse. *I think the image of Brian* as a sort of very soft, sensitive

If Epstein did feel a sexual pull towards John Lennon, it could easily have been transmuted into the care with which he managed the group

person is not the case. He was very strong-willed. I remember one occasion when John Lennon refused to do an interview during a tour and Brian went nose to nose with him. He took his tie and said: 'John you're soft', and stared him down. And John backed away."

In the run-up to a famous death, it is possible to see signs of impending doom everywhere. Yet in Epstein's case, the storyline is finely balanced right up until the final act. "Brian was a man of many moods," says Weiss. "He was a very multi-faceted person. With the advantage of looking back 30 years now, I would say that he certainly had all the symptoms of someone who was manic depressive." This emotional roller-

By 1966 several factors had put Epstein into a downward spiral. The Beatles were maturing and, after their decision to stop touring, had far less need of protection. The Selach Beatles merchandising deal had gone horribly wrong and was dragging through the courts. His close friend Alma Cogan had died of cancer in October And Epstein's one personal relationship, with a young bisexual called Dizz Gillespie, had ended in robbery and blackmail. "He began to feel like a liberated person but he was never able to sustain a long-term relationship," says Weiss. "He'd become depressed by the fact that he'd believe it was not him they wanted, but who he was."

Despite a suicide attempt in autumn 1966, Epstein remained positive and forward-looking. His musical interests were still acute. he boosted the Who, Cream, and Jimi Hendrix to Murray the K (a New York DJ) in early 1967, when all three were little known in the US. Friends disagree about its effect, but there is a case for saying that he found LSD — which he publicly admitted taking in June 1967 — beneficial. He was worried whether the Beatles would re-sign with him when his contract came up in September 1967 but, according to McCartney, "there was no question in our minds that we would stay with Brian. We didn't *want another manager.*"

Epstein died alone in his bedroom at Chapel Street, Mayfair, on August 27, 1967, one month after the Sexual Offences Act partially decriminalised homosexuality, and one month after the death of his father, Harry. There is no reason to doubt the verdict of the inquest: "poisoning by Carbrital, caused by an incautious self-overdose". Little was known about the dangers of prescription drugs at that time: indeed, Epstein's is the forerunner of all those sixties drug deaths -- when the limits of freedom were finally tested. It was a ghastly accident, the effects of which were immediate.

"It was a great loss to us and I know it really frightened us," says McCartney. "John got particularly frightened. I think he thought, 'Right, this is it. This is the end of the Beatles', and it kind of was. Brian's death opened the floodgates. It gave other people the possibility to come in, whereas before there had been no possibility. I think one or two of the other says got quite enamoured with Allan Klein, but I never liked the idea, partly because I'd seen how Brian did it and no one else was going to stack up against Brian in my mind. No one would ever be able to do it as good because you couldn't have the flair, the panache, the wit, the intelligence that Brian had. They would just merely be money managers. Brian was far more than that."

Jon Savage worked on The Brian Epstein Story which is showing on BBC2 on Christmas Day at 9.05pm and Boxing Day at 9pm

The Guardian Friday December 18 1998

Peter Pan flies out on the airwaves at Christmas. But Alan Bennett's radio reading recognises the story's underlying darkness, writes **Norman King**

Never Land



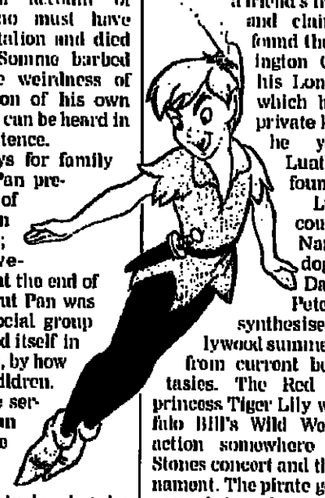
Don't listen to Alan Bennett's reading of Peter And Wendy on Radio 4 for soothing tosh. His camply avuncular voice entertains, and he wickedly intones piratical ditties as Victorian hymns; but J M Barrie's book is disturbing, and Bennett knows it.

He's always understood the power of that Britpop culture from Sherlock Holmes's debut in 1887 to the first world war, which created so many prototypes for genre fantasy, adult and junior. His stage-adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's 1908 The Wind In The Willows was close in its jolly-good-chaps innocence to Bennett's early TV play, A Day's Outing, an account of bicycling lads who must have joined a Pals' Battalion and died together on the Somme barbed wire in 1916. The weirdness of Barrie's novelisation of his own mega-stage success can be heard in Bennett's every sentence.

There were plays for family audiences before Pan premiered at the Duke of York's theatre on December 27, 1904; pantomime-as-we-know-it developed at the end of the 19th century. But Pan was aimed at a new social group which partly defined itself in a way familiar to us, by how it nurtured its children. Nurseries — where servants, rather than mother, cared for the young — had existed in wealthy households for centuries, but by 1900, a new, bigger middle class aspired to separate children's mealtimes, well-advertised toys, luxury gift-books and novels by writers like E Nesbit (The Railway Children), which assumed a safe nursery life as a base. Much of what we dream of as childhood was invented, for profit, at this time.

Barrie was from a much rawer era — born in 1860, ninth child of a Scots handloom weaver. He became journalist, novelist and then playwright, trying various modes, including The Wedding Guest, a problem play when Ibsen was novel (the "guest" being the groom's ex-mistress, carrying his baby); a costume number, Quality Street (the chocs are named after it); and a still-acute comedy of class identity, The Admirable Crichton, in which a butler shipwrecked with his master's family emerges as hero.

Barrie seems first to have thought of Peter Pan around 1900 during annual summer months in a Surrey cottage he had bought for his actress wife — he married aged 31 — where he romped with a friend's five young sons; and claimed to have found the plot in Kensington Gardens, near his London home, to which he had a rare private key, and where he yomped with Luath, his Newfoundland dog.



Luath, of course, became Nana, nursemaid dog to the play's Darling family.

Peter Pan was synthesised, like a Hollywood summer blockbuster, from current bestselling fantasies. The Red Indians and princess Tiger Lily were from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, live action somewhere between a Stones concert and the Royal Tournament. The pirate genre had been around since the 1870s, even before R L Stevenson's Treasure Island. That stalking crocodile, decomposing its dinner before digestion, was the ultimate horror of African exploration memoirs; inexorable as a cyborg is now. And fairy Tinker Bell, a spiteful sprite and sexual with it (her niche in the Lost Boys' den is curtained so that she can disrobe in privacy), was the period's paranormal element: the alien grey.

Flights of fantasy... Disney's Peter Pan (above left) and an advertisement for the first performance, at the Duke of York's in 1904
MAIN PICTURE: ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

That famous 1904 interactive sequence — "Every time a child says, 'I don't believe in fairies', there is a little fairy somewhere that falls down dead... Do you believe in fairies? Say quick that you believe! If you believe, clap your hands!" didn't sound twee then; more like "I want to believe" or "We are not alone". Flying was the dream — Wilbur and Orville Wright lifted into the sky just one year before Peter. While the Darling children were borrowed from that new audience, Barrie knew a five-year-old girl who addressed him as "my friendy" but could only lisp "my wendy". That's what he called the Darling girl. All Wendies derive from her.

Barrie alone believed the play would be a Christmas fixture forever. His impresario chum, Duke of York's manager Charles Frohman, wanted to postpone staging. Sir Henry Beerbohm Tree considered Barrie a clever newcomer (a Robert Zemeckis, if not a Steven Spielberg) but thought he had gone mad, and was reluctant to back the high costs for state-of-the-art SFX, the quick mobile light representing Tinker Bell and the multiple wire tracks that lifted several players simultaneously — Peter's rig remains risky during the duel with pirate chief Captain Hook.

Pan earned great reviews — "a capital entertainment of such originality, tenderness and daring" — and after an iffy box-office week ran until April annually. Barrie had later triumphs, including the political romance What Every Woman Knows, but Peter and its spin-offs funded, maybe justified, his life.

Ah, but the writer-for-children's own childless marriage ended in divorce in 1908, shocking then even for a theatrical. What gives you the creeps as you listen with Bennett to Peter And Wendy (published 1911) are its instinctual beliefs about childhood and maturity. Before PP, Barrie had idolised his mother outrageously in a tribute book and written two novels about a disturbed Scots boy hero, Tommy. Peter Pan — subtitled The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up — is the work of a fortyish man envying and idealising a childhood he never had: a privileged state which in fact didn't exist for a record number of families, begging for what minimal public relief was doled out in 1904.

And behind Barrie's personal troubles looms the national mood, as described in Mark Girouard's book The Return To Camelot, of intense emphasis on masculine sexual innocence and purity that sent the lambs to slaughter in 1914. Peter's Lost Boy companions prefigure in their behaviour and names — Toodles, Slightly — the trench mess of the Lost Generation. (Scott of the Antarctic's frozen expeditionaries were referred to as "Lost Boys", too.)

There's also an Anglo-American belief (not shared by most cultures) that marriage is the end, rather than the beginning, of adventure. The Darling parents are all you would not want to grow up to be, social embarrassments to any child; Wendy knows bliss ends by the age of two. Wendy-the-dream-mother/ wife, sexy Tink, and noble savage Tiger Lily, plus a few mermaids, compete for Peter; with only a wince of wistfulness, he chooses the endless fantasies of Never-Never Land over any satisfaction of real life. He might even prefer death. His most famous line, "To die will be an awfully big adventure", was much uttered publicly by noble chaps. Barrie's best friend, Frohman, quoted it as he plunged to his death in the Atlantic after the liner Lusitania was torpedoed in 1915.



Spiteful but sexy... Disney's Tinker Bell

Yet from the first performance Peter was always played by a woman (including the Broadway belter Mary Martin), often not that young, provided she had flying thighs and could take a gamine haircut: casting a real boy — before or after voice-break? — would have been impossible. Illustrations to the story are ambiguous, even the Disney cartoon of the 1950s, which promised Peter as an all-American boy. And not wanting to grow up isn't the same as "releasing the inner child", as in Steven Spielberg's take on Pan — the dire Hook; there's all the difference between wanting to go back and never wanting to go forward.

So don't expect Bennett to cheerily Christmas holiday breakfasts. (His rendering of Hook as a public schoolboy gone to the bad is close to his plays, An Englishman Abroad and A Question Of Attribution, about Russian spy rotters who'd been to Cambridge.) But if you want a primer of 20th century western fantasy life — the last time we heard Peter's navigational direction "Take the second star to the right and keep straight on till morning" uttered was on a Star Trek bridge — make a daily date.

Peter And Wendy, Radio 4, 9.45am December 26 — January 1.

★★★★★
"WONDERFULLY mischievous and refreshingly WICKED"
Beth Williams, Maxim



a film by François Ozon
sitcom
1/1/99

THIS CAPTIVATING DRAMA IS JUST WONDERFUL... SPIRITED, FUNNY AND UPLIFTING."
★★★★ Empire

Sharon Stone
Gena Rowlands
Harry Dean Stanton
Kieran Culkin
Elden Henson
and
Gillian Anderson



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STARTS DEC 26
Barbican 0171 382 7000
CURZON SOHO 0171 734 2255
RICHMOND FILMHOUSE 0181 332 0930
GATE CINEMA 0171 727 4043
RITZY 0171 737 2121
VIRGIN WHITELEY 0870 907 0711
VIRGIN WIMBLEDON 0870 907 0716
AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY